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GOFFIN'S COCKATOO.

PARROTS IN CAPTIVITY.

BY

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WITH NOTES ON SEVERAL SPECIES BY THE HON. AND REV. F. G. DUTTON.

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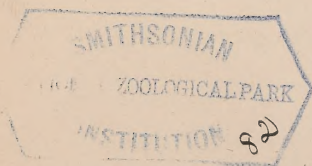
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TO

BENJAMIN FAWCETT, ESQ.,

THIS WORK IS CORDIALLY INSCRIBED

BY

HIS SINCERE AND OBLIGED FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE laudable attempts of the late Mr. C. Buxton, of Mr. Sydney Buxton, of the Hon. and Rev. Mr. Dutton, and of other amateurs to naturalize different kinds of Parrots, Parrakeets, Lories, and Cockatoos in this country, having failed, mainly in consequence of "those vile guns", it is to be feared that connoisseurs who wish to obtain an intimate acquaintance with these birds without going abroad, must content themselves with studying the manners, habits and peculiarities of the various species of Parrots in captivity, since to do so at large would appear, for the reasons stated above, and in the following pages, to be impossible; and it is a terrible pity that it should be so, for few sights are more attractive than a flock of these grand birds, the Macaws especially, wheeling around in the bright sunshine, when their variegated coats glisten like living jewels, and then settling down among the tops of some patriarchal trees, where they show themselves off to even greater advantage—their brilliant colours contrasting boldly with the dark green of the surrounding foliage—than when sporting freely in mid air.

Nevertheless, to observe them in captivity is not without its advantages, for it is undoubtedly true that a "homing" instinct is not characteristic of the race, and when permitted to fly abroad at their own free will, too many of the *Psittacidæ* are unable to find their way back again to their owner's grounds, and die miserably, either killed by birds or beasts of prey, such as hawks, foxes, weasels and so forth, shot by ignorant sportsmen (?), or starved to death from inability to find food for themselves: again, Parrots allowed to enjoy full, or even partial, freedom, seldom become so tame as individuals of the same species that are kept in the house, or, if ever so familiar when permitted to fly abroad, soon become more or less wild when allowed a wider range; so that after all the seemingly cruel plan of putting them in a cage, is, undoubtedly, the kindest in the end, and a Parrot that is well looked after by a kind and sympathetic owner, not only soon becomes reconciled to its fate, but actually so attached to its prison that it cannot be induced to leave it, and if taken out forcibly, returns to its familiar perch with evident satisfaction.

Fortunately there is a mode of keeping these interesting birds intermediate between that of confining them to a cage, and permitting them to range at freedom through the country round, namely, in a bird-room, or a good-sized aviary, appropriately furnished with an adequate number of rotten logs of wood: in the latter situation they can be seen almost to as great advantage as when flying freely abroad, and infinitely better than when shut up in a cage; they will also, at least many of them, breed freely in an aviary, and to study and observe their domestic habits, adds very materially to their owner's pleasure, and forms, in many cases, the chief incentive for keeping Parrakeets at all.

In the following pages we have entered into full particulars of the treatment necessary for preserving Parrots in health, and have expatiated at some length upon the strange and unnatural prejudice that yet lingers in some high quarters against allowing them water: we have also given ample details of the various modes of nidification peculiar to the different species, and pointed out the course of treatment necessary to induce them to perpetuate their kind in captivity, which most of them are ready enough to do—so ready, some of them, that under the most adverse conditions they will occasionally lay their eggs, and even rear the young.

It is by no means a long time since that to breed Parrots, or Parrakeets, of any kind, in this country was looked upon as a thing impossible; but to-day we find Budgerigars, Cockatiels, Red-rumps, Turquoisines, and some other species nesting as freely as our Domestic Pigeons, and bringing up large families with much less fuss than our Canaries: the experience thus gained should tempt connoisseurs to try some other kinds, the different Lories for example, and the smaller sorts of Cockatoos.

In Germany, where bird-keeping has been pursued as a study, if not as an avocation, for very many years, amateurs and aviculturists have succeeded in rearing almost every kind of Parrot hitherto imported; but with us the pursuit is yet quite in its infancy, and we believe that the species bred in this country might be counted on the fingers, if not of one hand, certainly on those of both hands; but every year adds to our knowledge of the delightful family of the *Psittacideæ*, and in the course of a few years more we hope that we shall not be so very far behind our Teutonic friends in this respect.

As we have said elsewhere, we do not believe in the "Diseases of Birds", concerning which so much is usually said in books treating of the subject we have in hand. Bechstein notwithstanding, we are of opinion that birds in their wild state seldom suffer from any ailment; hunger, cold and old age are the foes they have to combat, excepting, of course, predatory birds and beasts; and in captivity, these, with the exception of old age, which will find us all out at last, should we escape the attacks of every other enemy, should not enter into our calculations at all. In a properly regulated aviary our birds should never die except from age or accident. Draughts and unnatural food are what too often kill captive birds, and both surely can be avoided.

A knowledge of the habits of birds, to be gained, however, mainly by experience, will tell the aviarist what species he may safely cage together, and a fertile source of loss be thus avoided. The same may be said with respect to suitable and unsuitable food, comfortable dwelling-places, and appropriate nesting accommodation. Upon the question of cleanliness we will not insult our readers by touching; but many aviarists, especially beginners, are too apt to overcrowd their birds, and many, and dire misfortunes spring from this cause alone.

It is eminently undesirable to keep the larger Parrots in the same enclosure with the dwarf members of the race; Rosy Cockatoos, for instance, with Budgerigars, or Blue Mountain Lories with Madagascar White-heads; while the latter will be unsafe neighbours for the pretty little Blue-wings, the smallest and most charming members of the *Agapornis* sub-family, which had better either be placed in an aviary by themselves, or consorted with the tiny Astrilds, often, but erroneously, named Ornamental Finches.

Few amateurs have facilities for keeping the larger Parrots and Cockatoos in any numbers, so as to ensure the profitable breeding of these in many ways desirable birds; their comparatively huge dimensions necessitate a wide accommodation, and their noisy outcries preclude the possibility of their being kept anywhere but in a remote country district, far beyond the reach of neighbouring sensitive human ears: to keep a flock of Cockatoos in a town, or even village, would entail upon the rash individual who made the attempt, attentions similar to those bestowed upon the cat-loving Countess at Kensington, whose pro-feline proclivities have more than once formed the subject of a judicial investigation. Still the Great Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo has been successfully bred in Germany, and, but for an untoward accident, we have no doubt we should have bred Goffin's Cockatoo. On the whole, however, except in very special cases, the aviarist will do well to confine his attention to breeding Parrakeets, which may be preserved without offence to neighbours of a different taste, and are also more readily provided for in the way of suitable habitations, than the owners of beaks of such formidable dimensions and tremendous power as the Macaws and the greater Cockatoos.

The present volume of *Parrots in Captivity* is, so to speak, tentative, but should this attempt in the direction of familiarising the public with a most delightful class of birds, have the success we hope for, and which the efforts of our enterprising publisher, who has spared neither pains nor expense to make the work as attractive as possible, seem to warrant us in expecting, we propose to continue the subject, if not to exhaustion, at least to the extent of three or four volumes more.

En attendant, we must express our obligation to the kind friends whose assistance has been instrumental in making the work what it is; nor can we overlook the efforts of the artist, whose life-like portraits of the various birds have added so much to its usefulness and attractiveness: in almost every instance the plates have been drawn and coloured from life, and are

scarcely to be exceeded in any ornithological work, at least of a popular character, with which we are acquainted.

In conclusion we would remark that many people now keep Parrots, and many more are desirous of doing so, but very few of those persons understand how their favourites should be treated, and are pained and surprised when the poor things die soon after passing into their possession. An owner of a Parrot bereaved in this sudden and unexpected manner is apt to blame the dealer from whom he purchased the bird, the friend, or book, that advised him to feed it after such and such a manner, in a word, any one but himself, who, in ninety-nine cases out of one hundred, is the only one to blame.

It stands to reason that a Parrot, especially a young one, taken suddenly away from the crowded cage in the dealer's shop, where the warmth and society of its companions, and often their friendly mouthfuls of food thrust generously into its own, will take cold, and mope and pine, when placed in a cage, and too often a draught, by itself. The better plan is to buy at least two birds and place them, at first, in the same cage, open only in front, and by degrees accustom them to more air and freedom; after a while they may be placed in open cages, side by side, and when, at last, they seem to be thoroughly acclimatised, they may, if the owner does not want them both, be separated, and the least desirable of the two sold, usually at a considerable advance upon the purchased price.

Poeta nascitur non fit, said Horace long ago; similarly a true bird-fancier has the love of the feathered portion of creation born in him without doubt; at least such is our own case, and if in the following pages, and our other works on the subject, we have been of even a little use to our favourites, by teaching their owners how to treat them better than they had previously been able to do, we feel that our labours have not been in vain.

W. T. G.

Moirs House, Surrey.

PARROTS IN CAPTIVITY.

GOFFIN'S COCKATOO.

Psittacus Goffini, RUSS.

SYNONYM: *Cacatua Goffini*. GERMAN: *Goffin's Kakadu*.

THIS altogether charming and comparatively rare bird, is stated in the *Catalogue of the London Zoological Society* to be a native of Queensland, but Dr. Karl Russ, the well-known ornithologist of Berlin, describes it as coming from the Solomon Islands, (*von den Salomons Inseln*), and from our knowledge of both authorities we give a decided preference to the latter.

Goffin is about the size of a large African Grey (*Psittacus erithacus*), and is very commonly called by the English dealers "The Crested White Parrot"; why, it would be difficult to say, for he is unmistakably a Cockatoo. The general colour of the plumage is white, but the under surface of the wings and tail is pale straw-colour, the two front feathers of the crest are also white, but the rest are salmon-coloured from the base up to about two thirds of their length: the bird is covered with a white powder that comes off on the hands when it is touched, but which imparts a gloss, or finish to its toilet, such as one sees upon the Java Sparrow and several other kinds of birds. The beak is white, and the legs and feet whitish lead colour.

The female differs from her mate in several respects: in the first place, she is perceptibly smaller, and of slimmer build, her crest is not nearly so well developed, the straw or primrose tint on the under surface of the wings and tail is scarcely apparent, she is a very quiet,

noiseless personage, rarely opening her mouth, except to appropriate the various good things in the shape of food with which her owner has supplied her, and—this is the surest differentiating mark,—the irides in her case are chesnut brown, while those of her lord and master are jet-black.

Goffin, as we have said, is comparatively a rare bird, so that few people have had the pleasure of possessing a specimen: let those who are so fortunate as to include one in their collection, take care of him, for he is teachable and lovable, making one of the most charming pets that can be imagined. There seems no limit to the capacity for acquiring knowledge of the human language possessed by this intelligent bird, which often picks up, not only words, but long sentences, which have been pronounced in its presence but on a single occasion; while as for domestic sounds of all kinds, from the whimpering of an infant to the crowing of cocks, and even the song of a canary bird, he readily acquires, and with wonderful fidelity to nature reproduces them all.

The female, as we have said, is a silent bird; one that we had in our possession for some time, though mated with a most loquacious husband, never succeeded in mastering his acquired language, beyond repeating in a low and timid voice the two words "Well" and "Martha"—the latter her own name.

The male has one great drawback, however, he is an inveterate and ear-piercing screamer, not at all times be it understood, but when he is "put out", or hungry, or wants to be let out of his cage for a ramble round the room, or is feeling dull, or, perhaps, poor thing! when his liver is out of order: but we have never heard the female scream, not even when teased and provoked in every possible way; hers really seems to be an imperturbable temper, and oh! what a blessed possession that is to be sure, for bird or man!

Although natives of an intertropical region, the Goffins are by no means delicate, but on the contrary hardy to the extent of being wintered safely out of doors in a partially covered aviary, where, if provided with suitable nesting arrangements they will also breed.

Like all the Parrot tribe, with one or two doubtful exceptions, the nesting-place of Goffin's Cockatoos is in the hollow of some dead branch of one of the larger trees that flourish in their native wilds: beyond smoothing out, and carefully freeing from all extraneous matter, the cavity they have selected for their dwelling place, these birds make no nest, properly so called, but lay their eggs on the smooth wood; three or four in number, and about the same size as those of the Collared Dove (*Columba risorius*) but somewhat rounder, the eggs are pure white, hatched in twenty-one days, and there are usually two broods

in the season, which extends, in this country, from May to September. Young ones hatched in the latter month, however, will not be reared unless removed indoors along with their parents, for the first cold night after they quitted the nest would be surely fatal to them.

Goffins grow very slowly, taking quite three years to attain maturity, so that they are long-lived birds, enduring, with ordinary care, for a long time in the house: this accounts for the fact that dealers, who really know little or nothing about these birds, try to persuade intending purchasers that the large birds are males, and the small ones females: as we have said the female *is* smaller, but size is not an infallible guide to the differentiation of the sexes, but the colour of the iris is, and the aviarist will do well to rely upon no other.

There are stories of flesh-eating Parrots current, but requiring confirmation: many of these birds, however are partially insectivorous, and of the latter Goffin is undoubtedly one; at the same time, in captivity, he will do extremely well without animal food, which, unless he is mated, or rearing a young family, is of far too stimulating a nature to be given except at rarest intervals. Oats, maize, canary and hemp-seed, boiled potatoes, a crust of bread or a captain's biscuit, are all good for him; the seeds as his ordinary diet, and the other comestibles mentioned as an occasional *bonne bouche*. It may be as well, here, to caution the intending purchaser—and we flatter ourselves that every reader of this article will, sooner or later, be one—that it is unwise to keep Master Goffin in the dining-room, at least while meals are being partaken of, for he will become so clamorous for potato, and other dainties that his owners will know no peace: let him be helped as freely as possible, he will just take one tiny bite from the morsel he holds in his handy foot, drop it, literally like a hot potato, to the bottom of his cage, and incontinently shout for “more”; which becomes monotonous after a while and decidedly unpleasant. It is of no use to cover him over, he only screams the louder, and even if banished to a distant part of the house, his shrill shrieks will permeate every portion of it, until his owners wish him back upon his native islands.

Once a bad habit has taken hold of one of these birds, it is simply impossible to break him off it, so that the obvious course is not to permit him to contract one: keep him out of the room at meal-times, feed him at stated intervals, and all will go well; but let him see you eating—what more natural than that he should want his share?—and there will be no peace while he remains upon the premises.

Green food is indispensable, groundsel in flower, dandelions, chicory, lettuce that has been a day or two out of the ground, a slice of carrot, too, raw or cooked, are excellent for keeping him in health, and should,

of course, be more sparingly afforded in winter than in summer, when the supply may be practically unlimited.

If there are young ones to be provided for in the nest, soaked bread must be added to the bill of fare—soaked in water, mark you, *never* in milk, and the maize and oats may be advantageously boiled for a couple of hours, strained and let become quite cold, before being placed in the seed-pans. These and the drinking-vessels should preferably be of delf-ware, rather than of tin or wood; indeed the latter would not be of more than a day's use, for Goffin is an inveterate "whittler", the former are not easily cleaned, and nothing foul should be tolerated for a moment in the aviary.

Here let us remark that a pair of Goffins will require a dwelling-place all to themselves, for they are not to be trusted with other birds; the smaller they would kill, and very probably partially devour, and the larger they would persecute until the lives of the intruders became a burden to themselves, or they turned round upon their assailants and gave them "tit for tat", and in either case there would not be the faintest chance of any young Goffins making their appearance upon the scene.

Grasshoppers, where the aviarist lives in the country, ants' eggs, that is to say the pupæ of the ants in their cocoons, should be supplied, though rather sparingly, when there are young ones in the nest to be fed: and in towns, crickets and blackbeetles, or even mealworms will answer the same purpose. Cockchaffers, and daddy-long-legs (*Tipula*) will be relished, but insect food of some kind is indispensable if Goffin is to breed.

We are aware that the above directions will be looked upon by some as heterodox and objectionable to the last degree: *tant pis, messieurs*, we speak from experience, and as the French say "*rien n'est plus brutal qu'un fait.*"

We cannot conclude our observations, necessarily limited in extent, seeing that we have already said so much about the Goffin elsewhere, without adverting to the ancient, horrible and most persistent superstition that Parrots (including Cockatoos) do not require water!

That none of the family are great drinkers we admit; still they do drink, and many of them cannot and will not survive for any length of time in captivity without a sufficient supply—of rain water where practicable—but water of some kind. Milk, so generally forced upon Parrots, is no substitute, and sopped bread is simply an abomination. Parrots, as a rule, are small eaters, as well as moderate drinkers, but in their wild state they live on unripe, or at least soft seeds, and consequently do not require so very much fluid to aid their digestion:

but in the house it is vastly different, for there their chief food is absolutely dry, so that the Parrot, or Cockatoo, that, when wild, would have been amply satisfied with the amount of moisture he could lick off the leaves and grass, wet with the heavy dews of intertropical regions, must have water to drink, or he will soon get out of health; so that to deprive him of water, and force him, under such circumstances, to eat a quantity of "sop" for the sake of the fluid it contains, is to ruin his digestion, upset his liver and his temper, and turn an amiable bird into a spiteful and screeching dyspeptic. No, Parrots must have water, and plenty of it, and we regret to have to record the fact that the authorities at the "Zoo" are not yet disabused of the contrary notion, which no doubt, in great measure, accounts for the recent dates prefixed to most of the cages in the Parrot House.

Eheu! poor Paul Goffin, presented to the Gardens in a moment of irritation induced by your too loudly and incessantly repeated demands for "Potato!", when the bottom of your cage was littered with that valuable tuber, we have no doubt that deprivation of your accustomed potations was the cause of your untimely death, in less than two years after your reception in that Institution, to which, if we had only known, you never should have gone.

Parrots, as a rule, do not care to bathe, that is to "tub"; but they love to stand out in a warm summer shower, and stretch out each limb alternately to catch the genial drops as they gently fall from heaven; and nothing gives them greater pleasure than to roll and tumble, to swim so to speak, in long grass that has just been soaked by a passing shower. Failing, however, these natural modes of taking a bath, Master Goffin, and Mistress Goffin, too, for that matter, will take water in their beaks, now and then, from their drinking troughs and sprinkling it on their backs, clinging the while to the bars of their cage with outstretched wings and tail, and every feather ruffled out, making a most consummate fuss, quite incommensurate with the importance of the occasion. Should a warm summer shower be falling at any time, Goffin will enjoy being placed outside to receive it on his back; but should the weather be hot and dry, and no prospect of rain apparent, a bath from the fine rose of a watering-pot, will be equally appreciated.

So much for Goffin's Cockatoo which, it will doubtless be gathered from the above remarks, is one of our greatest favourites, and most deservedly so, for we know no member of the *Psittacidae* that combines the possession of so many admirable qualities with a paucity of bad ones as the charming bird to which the late Mr. Goffin lent, or rather gave his name.

Goffins being, as we have said, comparatively rare birds, are conse-

quently dear, £5 or £6 apiece being the price demanded for them by the dealers; though occasionally they may be picked up for a much less sum: one fine specimen I bought for a sovereign, and gave thirty shillings for another, but these are instances of good luck that are not to be met with every day, for even quite young individuals are readily disposed of for £3 each, and on the continent they are even more scarce than in England, and proportionately dearer.

Mr. Joseph Abrahams, with whom we have dealt for years, is seldom without one or two of these charming birds in his shop; and even if he has not got them in stock, is able to procure them for connoisseurs, owing to his having correspondents and collectors in every part of the world, who are constantly sending him rare birds of every kind.



GREAT WHITE-CRESTED COCKATOO.

GREAT WHITE-CRESTED COCKATOO.

Psittacus leucolophus, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Cacatua leucolophus*, *Cacatua cristatella*,
Plictolophus leucolophus, etc. GERMAN: *Der weisshäubige Kakadu*.

THIS fine bird is often confounded with the Red-crested Cockatoo (*Psittacus Moluccensis*), its very near relative, as well as with its distant connection, the Great Sulphur-crested Cockatoo of Australia (*Psittacus galeritus*); it is a native of the Eastern Moluccas, while the Red-crested variety is only found in Ceram, one of the larger islands of the group, and the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo abounds in Tasmania, and the whole of the southern portions of the Australian mainland.

The Moluccas being a Dutch possession, this bird generally arrives in England *via* Holland, and commands a good price in the bird-market: from sixty to ninety marks being asked and given for it in Germany, while in England it can seldom be obtained for a less sum than £3 or £4.

In size it almost equals the dimensions of the Red and Blue Macaw (*Psittacus Macao*). The colour of the beak is bluish-black, the feet are lead colour, and the strong nails black: a white circle surrounds the eye, the irides are black, or brown; the former colour indicating the male and the latter the female. The whole of the plumage is snow-white, with the exception of the primaries and the exterior feathers of the tail, which are primrose yellow. The crest, which the bird can raise and depress at will, is five inches in length, and, when the owner is at rest, it lays close back against the head and upper part of the neck.

The Red-crested variety, (the difference is so slight that it cannot be constituted into a species) has the crest feathers, all but the first

pair, of a dull orange red, otherwise the birds are exactly similar in size and appearance, and are exceedingly handsome to look at, but awfully noisy: their shrieks being audible, on a calm day, at an immense distance, so much so that when they are flying so high up in the air as to be actually invisible to the unassisted eye, their voices can yet be distinctly heard, somewhat modified and mellowed by distance, it is true, but far too loud, even then, to be agreeable. Their ordinary cry is a repetition of their own name, "Cock-a-too, Cock-a-too!" and a yell that is best represented by the syllables "Cur-rah!" much emphasis being laid upon the latter, which is terrifically loud, and when angry or excited they vociferate these discordant notes an almost unlimited number of times.

Occasionally one of these birds will learn to pronounce a few words with tolerable distinctness, but their *forte* lies in the imitation of the barking of dogs, the crowing of cocks, the "gobbling" of turkeys, and the cackling of ducks, hens, and geese: but more particularly in the rendering, with much fidelity, but in an exaggerated key, the noisy outcries of a domestic fowl that has just produced an egg, and is vain-gloriously proclaiming the achievement to her companions. They may be readily taught to throw up their wings, dance on their perch, hold out a foot to shake hands, and bow their heads in salutation of a visitor.

There is no perceptible difference between the sexes, except in the colour of the irides, but the female, perhaps, is a trifle less noisy than her mate. Like all the rest of the Parrot family, with a few doubtful exceptions, these birds make their nests in hollow trees, where the female deposits two or three white eggs, which are hatched in twenty-one days: the young grow very slowly, and are quite three years old before they reach maturity: there is, generally, only one brood in a season.

As the Great White Cockatoos are neither delicate, nor difficult to keep, although natives of a sultry clime, it ought to be quite possible to breed them in captivity: but if it were desired to make the attempt, the cage, or aviary rather, provided for their reception, would require to be made of rods of iron of almost the same size and strength as those employed in the construction of a lion's den, for nothing else, we feel assured, would be able to resist the continual assaults of those tremendous engines of destruction, the beaks of a pair of Great White Cockatoos.

The general custom in Germany is to give these birds a spacious cage in the form of a bell, from the top of which is hung a metal ring, in which they like to sit and swing themselves, the oscillating movement probably reminding them of the swaying to and fro of the branches

of the trees in their native land. In England they are usually kept chained by one leg to a perch fixed at right angles to an upright stand of three or four feet in height. Stand and cross-bar should be made of the hardest obtainable wood, and the ends of the perch should be cased in tin or zinc; but perches made of metal are apt to give the birds cramp, and even to produce inflammation of the lungs and bowels, by chilling the poor creatures when the weather is cold; and we all know what a distressing sensation is produced throughout the entire system, when we sit shivering with cold feet, on some ungenial winter's day, while waiting for a train perchance, or for the promised arrival of a friend who fails to keep his appointment.

The Great White Cockatoo is very easily tamed, if taken young from the nest, and brought up by hand, or rather by mouth, for the proper way to bring up young Parrots or Cockatoos who have lost, or been taken from, their parents, is to boil some maize and oats until they are quite soft, chew them to small pieces in the mouth, and let the young things feed themselves there as they do when they trust their beaks into their father's bill. A bird thus reared will become perfectly tame and confiding, and, especially if his owner lives in the country, may be trusted with entire liberty out of doors, even to accompanying his master, or mistress, on a long walk, or ride: with children, however, they are nearly always spiteful and not to be trusted, and of dogs they have an utter abhorrence, which they take every opportunity of displaying.

A bird of this species that belonged to a lady friend of ours, was so tame that he was suffered to go about the place at his own sweet will, and delighted in sitting on a paling some three or four feet away from the utmost range of the chained house-dog, whom "Cocky" took a malicious pleasure in driving almost to madness, which from his great proficiency in the canine tongue, he could do without the least difficulty whenever he liked, and in which, judging from the effect produced upon his enemy, he was in the habit of making anything but complimentary remarks upon the latter, and possibly his relatives and friends. This bird, too, used apparently to take the greatest delight in swooping down upon Ponto, and passing over his back, at a sufficient distance to escape his jaws and claws, but yet near enough to flap him on the nose with his powerful pinions: but the pitcher may go to the well too often, and Master Cocky one day dared the house-dog for the last time.

Whether he swooped down lower, or more slowly than usual, or whether the dog exerted more strength and leaped higher and with greater impetus, who shall say? the bird was caught in Ponto's jaws,

got one nip, that stained with carmine his snowy plumes, and Cocky's mistress mourned the loss of her favourite, while everyone else about the place rejoiced; for the poor fellow had not been too well beloved by the children and retainers, who all, more than once, at one time or another, had felt the powerful pressure of his formidable bill upon their hands or necks: for the poor faithful Cockatoo was so fond of the dear lady who had tended him and loved him from his early youth, that he was madly jealous of anyone and everyone who dared to approach her. On one occasion she called to a little son to bring her a newspaper out of the house to an arbour where she was sitting, with Cocky dozing on her shoulder, and the child, instead of handing the newspaper quietly to his mother, tossed it at her playfully from the arbour door, and the bird, always on the *qui vive*, even when apparently asleep, if his dear mistress was near, dashed at once at the boy, who instinctively turned and fled, but was nipped on the back of the neck by the furious Cockatoo, who construed the playful act of the child into an assault requiring condign punishment, and accordingly fastened his sharp beak into the back of the youngster's neck, almost carrying away the piece; and to this day, though many years have elapsed since then, the white scar remains to attest the power of the Cockatoo's mandibles and the strength of his affection for his mistress.

"In March, 1775," says Buffon, in his description of the Great White one, "there were two, a male and a female, at the fair of St. Germain, in Paris, which obeyed with great docility the orders given to them, either to spread out their crest, or salute people with a bend of the head, or to touch different objects with their beak or tongue, or to reply to questions from their master with a mark of assent, which clearly expressed a silent 'yes': they also showed by repeated signs the number of persons in the room, the hour of the day, the colour of clothes, etc: they kissed one another by touching their beaks, and even caressed each other: this showed a desire to pair, and the master affirms that they often do so, even in our climates."

We are inclined to think that they would readily nest, and bring up their young in captivity, were they but afforded an opportunity for doing so, but the experiment, we suspect, has never been fairly tried, at least we have not heard of young of this species having been as yet produced in Europe, although one of these birds, flying at liberty, in the woods round Northrepps Hall, mated with a hen Leadbeater (*Psittacus Leadbeateri*), and the pair produced a couple of fine hybrids, partaking of the characteristics of both parents, but were, with the latter, subsequently shot by a stupid farmer, who ought to have known better, but could not, apparently, resist the temptation of "potting" some

strange birds that chanced to fly within range of his murderous gun.

Continuing his remarks about these birds, Buffon observes:—"Cockatoos, which may be known by their crest, are not easily taught to speak" (with the exception of Goffin, which was unknown in your day, M. de Buffon) "there is one species which does not speak at all; but this is, in some measure, compensated for by the great facility with which they are tamed; in some parts of India they are even so far domesticated that they will build their nests on the roofs of the houses: this facility of education is owing to their intelligence, which is very superior to that of other Parrots. They listen, understand, and obey; but it is in vain that they make the same efforts to repeat what is said to them; they seem to wish to make up for it by other expressions of feeling and by affectionate caresses. There is a mildness and grace in all their movements which greatly add to their beauty. Though the Cockatoos, like other Parrots, use their bill in ascending and descending, to and from their perch, yet they have not their heavy disagreeable step; on the contrary, they are very active, and hop about very nimbly."

With reference to the above quotation from a work written more than a hundred years ago, we would simply remark that the great French naturalist had, evidently, no personal knowledge of the mode of nidification peculiar to these birds, or he would not have talked about their "building their nests on the roofs of the houses", for Cockatoos build no nest, properly so called, as is very well known, and would be more likely to seek for a location in the chimney, than upon the roof: in fact we have heard of a pair of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, that did actually once attempt such a feat, but came to sad grief among the soot, and signally failed in their praiseworthy endeavours to bring up a young family in such an unsuitable situation.

The principal food of these noble-looking birds consists of oats, maize, hempseed, biscuits, a piece of apple or carrot, and any green food that may be obtainable, always excepting parsley, which is as prussic acid to the whole race: but lettuce, not too fresh, dandelions, groundsel, etc., are invaluable for keeping them in health. They are free drinkers, and should always have access to a supply of clean fresh water, both for drinking and bathing purposes: not that they are much given to "tubbing", but they glory in a warm summer shower, opening their wings, and spreading out their tails to catch the falling pearls, in default of which they will scatter mouthfuls of water upon their backs. Milk, meat, and dainties of all kinds are not fit for them, and should never be given; a course of such diet soon puts their digestive apparatus out of gear, causes heat of the blood, and irritation of the skin, to allay which the wretched creatures will pluck out all the feathers

they can reach on every part of their bodies, until they are quite bare, with the exception of the head, and the quill and tail feathers, the destruction of which I have never seen them able to accomplish.

In such a deplorable case what is to be done? What measures are to be adopted to prevent this self-mutilation? In the first place, put the bird upon an exclusively vegetable diet, give clean water, fresh dry sharp river-sand, an abundance of green food, of every kind in season, and for three days put a pinch of carbonate of magnesia (*levis*) in the drinking vessel: lastly restore the bird to comparative liberty in an empty room, or loft, free from draughts, and furnished with a variety of logs and branches upon which the poor thing can find more congenial exercise for its beak, than in plucking out by the roots, and chewing, its own feathers. Or, where an empty room is not available, make a collar of pasteboard sufficiently large to prevent the bird from reaching its feathers, when it is slipped over its head, and fixed upon its neck, as a similar contrivance is often placed upon the neck of a horse, to keep the latter animal from nibbling at a sore upon its legs, or flanks: the former mode of procedure, however, is much the more desirable, where attainable, as the collar is apt to greatly terrify the bird at first, and is always difficult of adjustment.

The Great White Cockatoo is very hardy, and with the most ordinary care will live for quite a number of years in captivity upon the simple food recommended above, and will enjoy uninterrupted health; but if pampered and coddled, it will become gouty on the feet, dyspeptic and altogether a miserable and disagreeable object: *Verbum sap.*

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XIX



LEADBEATER'S COCKATOO

LEADBEATER'S COCKATOO.

Psittacus Leadbeateri, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Plyctolophus Leadbeateri*, *Plyctolophus erythropterus*,
Cacatua Leadbeateri. GERMAN: *Der Inka-Kakadu*.

TIME was when the acquisition of this glorious bird meant money, and that a considerable sum; from £25 to £30 apiece being asked and freely given; but then communication with Australia was a matter of difficulty, from four to seven months being reckoned an ordinary passage; whereas now the transit is accomplished in about forty days, and the Leadbeater's price has fallen accordingly to £5 or £6; and occasionally a fine specimen may be picked up for a much less sum.

Beyond his beauty, and that is great, there is nothing to recommend this bird to the notice of amateurs, for he is not very intelligent, nor is he docile; he never learns much, and invariably remains wild and suspicious, even after years of captivity, and much patient effort to convert him to a better frame of mind. Doubtless there are exceptions to the rule we have laid down, for birds have their several idiosyncrasies as well as men, and individuals are always to be found of a more pliable disposition than the average members of their race.

Dr. Russ has not very much to say about this fine bird, but in his *Handbook* dismisses it with a curt notice of half-a-dozen lines, quoting its price in Germany at from fifty to sixty marks, which is less than the sum for which it can be purchased here: but this is easily to be accounted for, the Germans are essentially a practical people, and, when all has been said for him that can be said, Leadbeater is an impracticable bird.

In size, Leadbeater's Cockatoo rather exceeds the common Grey Parrot, and is a trifle larger than Goffin's; the general colour is that of raspberries and cream, a most delicious tint suggestive of summer days at a farmhouse in the country when we were young: the pink shade is deeper on the head, neck and under parts of the body than

on the back and wings, which are all but white: the long crest of narrow pointed feathery plumes is a very magnificent affair, red at the base, followed by an inch or so of bright canary yellow, then red again with tips of purest white: and the bird appears to be conscious that its chief charm lies in this appendage, for it is never weary of displaying it for the admiration of all and sundry beholders. The beak is of a pale grey-white; the upper mandible strangely sinuated and toothed; the feathers at the immediate base of the bill are crimson, forming a narrow band or fillet. The under surface of the wings is rich crimson red. The legs and toes are dark grey, the scales distinctly marked by lines of a lighter shade of the same colour.

The female bears a general resemblance to her lord, but is paler on the breast; the irides, however, are the surest indication of the sex of a given bird, as in the female they are reddish brown, and jet black in the male. The late Mr. John Gould, in his magnificent work on *The Birds of Australia*, represents two of these Cockatoos, which he calls male and female, with red-brown irides, and the same thing occurs in his illustration of the Rosy Cockatoo (*Psittacus roseicapillus*), so that he does not appear to have noticed this distinction: but such trifling omissions are easily accounted for, and in nowise detract from the sterling merit of the grandest work on ornithological Australia in the language.

There is no instance on record of this Cockatoo having bred in Europe, and it is such a very shy and suspicious bird, we scarcely think there will be, until some enthusiastic amateur, gifted with wealth and much patience, constructs a large and strong aviary, appropriately furnished with the trunk and limbs of a dead tree, and devotes it solely to the use of a pair of these splendid birds; or turns a couple out into a wood, far from the guns of bovine-brained agriculturists; when, as likely as not, the Leadbeaters, with a perverseness characteristic of their family, will separate, each contracting an alliance with a partner of a different kind, and bring up broods of monstrous hybrids, as they are recorded to have done at Northrepps Hall, rather than consent to perpetuate their race in a foreign country and uncongenial clime.

Vigors, who was the first English writer to describe this Cockatoo, named it after a friend, Mr. Leadbeater, well-known to ornithologists, and has left us a most interesting account of a truly interesting bird.

Quoting from the *Notes* of Mr. Caley, he says:—"These birds are shy and not easily approached. The flesh of the young is accounted good eating. I have heard from the natives that it makes its nest in the rotten limbs of trees, of nothing more than the vegetable mould formed by the decayed parts of the bough; that it has no more than

two young ones at a time; and that the eggs are white, without spots. The natives first find where the nests are, by the birds making *Co'tora* in an adjoining tree, which lies in conspicuous heaps upon the ground. *Co'tora* is the bark stripped off the small branches, and cut into minute pieces. When the young ones are nearly fledged, the old birds cut a quantity of young branches from the adjoining trees, but never from that in which the nest is situated. They are sometimes found to enter the hollow limb as far as two yards. The nests are generally found in a *black-butted gum-tree*, and also in *Coroy'bo*, *Cajim-bora*, and *Yarrow'ry* trees (species of *Eucalyptus*)."

The illustration that accompanies the above description represents the crest displayed, fan-wise, across the forehead of the bird, whereas it can only be expanded from back to front, and by no means from side to side; but the drawing was evidently taken from an imperfectly stuffed skin, and presents altogether a distorted, and almost fanciful appearance.

Not having kept this Cockatoo, we are not in a position to say much more about it: however most of the writers we have consulted give it by no means a good character; Mr. Gedney alone declaring it to be "the most amiable of the Cockatoo tribe", and then goes on to say:—"The Leadbeater has the common failing of his tribe, he is addicted to screaming; although, to do him justice, I must say that his sins in this respect are neither so frequent nor so heinous as those of other Cockatoos—and indeed when a bird of this species becomes thoroughly accustomed to those about him, there is very little to complain of in the matter of screaming, unless he gets teased by children or servants."

And this author's further comments upon the objectionable practice above alluded to, are so practical and sensible that we make no apology for quoting them, especially as they occupy no very extended space.

"This practice (teasing) spoils most of the excitable birds of the Parrot and Cockatoo tribes, and although it may be very entertaining to see them get into a terrible passion, throw up their wings and crests, and give vent to their wrath in shrieks of fiery indignation, still a bird that is provoked to such exhibitions of temper will soon become a nuisance to any household, and no amount of subsequent good treatment and petting will eradicate the tendency to give way to uncontrolled outbursts of passion upon the most trivial provocation."

Which is perfectly true: so let the reader see to it that the Cockatoo or Parrot he, or she, has become possessed of be not subjected to such treatment, or the consequences will be that bird and master, after awhile, will be unable to live in the same house together.

The food of this species should be the same that has been recommended for Goffin and the Great White-crested Cockatoo, namely: maize, oats,

hempseed, biscuit, carrot, and green food of every description, not forgetting plenty of water, but never, on any account, meat or milk. If it be desired to try and get a pair to breed, a few mealworms, or daddy-long-legs may be added to the ordinary diet, but even these should never be offered to a solitary Leadbeater, kept as a pet in a cage, or chained to an ordinary Parrot-stand: for the effect of animal food upon these birds is to excite them to such a degree that, where they are unable to gratify their inclinations in the natural way, they, very frequently, turn to and strip themselves of every feather they can reach; which, we need scarcely observe, gives them a miserable, poverty-struck, woe-begone, appearance that is the reverse of prepossessive.

A Leadbeater, properly looked after, is not by any means a delicate bird, but is perfectly well able, as many who have kept it can attest, to pass even our severest winter out of doors, not only with impunity, but actually in the enjoyment of far more robust and perfect health, than if he had been cared for and coddled up in-doors.

Of draughts, however, he, in common with every bird, delicate or hardy, is exceedingly impatient: a few minutes exposure to a cold current of air, being sufficient to induce an attack of bronchitis, or of inflammation of the lungs and bowels: all which maladies are far more readily prevented than cured. Out of doors, in a comfortable aviary, abrupt transitions of temperature are, usually, productive of no bad effects; but in the house it is different, so that care must be taken that a pet bird be not exposed to such depressing influences, or the consequences may be, promptly, disastrous to the last degree.



LESSER LEMON-CRESTED COCKATOO.

BESSER

LEMON-CRESTED COCKATOO.

Psittacus sulphureus, Russ.SYNONYMS: *Albus galeritus*, *Cacatua luteo-cristata*, *Cacatua sulphurea*,*Ptyctolophus sulphureus*, etc.GERMAN: *Der Kleine gelbgehäubte Kakadu*.

THIS bird is a miniature presentment of the great Australian Lemon-crested Cockatoo, but, according to our experience, lacks the intelligence and docility of the latter, it is about fourteen inches in length; the beak, feet, and legs are black, the orbits white, and the irides red or black, according to the sex of the individual. The general colour of the plumage is white, with a primrose yellow shade on the wings and tail, as well as a spot of the same colour beneath the eyes; the crest is acuminate, and composed of soft feathers of a bright lemon tint, the ends of which, when the appendage is erect, have a forward inclination.

It is a native of the Moluccas, and also occurs in the Celebes Islands, and has been known to Parrot fanciers since the days of Buffon, who named it *le Cacatoës à huppe jaune*. Many of these birds are yearly imported into Europe, but are more frequently to be met with in Holland and France, than in England, or in Germany.

While unable ourselves to say much in favour of this bird, we feel bound in justice to it to append the favourable testimony as to its merits that is to be found in Dr. Karl Russ's *Handbook*.—"The variety from the Celebes has been longest in the market, but is still a favourite, and in much request, and learns to speak easily and well; it is very tame and more docile than any other."

This is strong praise, and we incline to the belief that the doctor

was singularly fortunate in the individual he possessed; but perhaps it was we that were unfortunate, for Mr. Wiener corroborates the account of this bird given by Dr. Russ, and in his charming, but too brief, book on *Foreign Birds*, writes, "This Cockatoo (the Lesser Lemon-Crest) becomes very tame and affectionate, is quite hardy, but not as good a talker as the Rose-crested and Greater White-crested Cockatoos (*Psittacus Moluccensis* and *Psittacus leucolophus*), although a much better linguist than the Australian Cockatoos."

Bechstein also wrote of this bird:—"It comes from the same country as the Great White Cockatoo, to which it yields neither in elegance, intelligence, docility, nor mildness. It is fond of caresses, and returns them with pleasure: all its motions are equally full of grace, delicacy, and beauty."

After that we feel that we are quite out of court, and must reverse our judgment, merely remarking that birds have their several idiosyncrasies, and people do not half enough consider this; although there is, of course, a certain character running through every species, thus Cockatoos will be easily tamed, while *Platyceci* are shy; but, apart from that, individuals differ immensely, and, as we have said, we appear to have been exceptionally unfortunate in our experience with several species, and think we must try again at the first opportunity.

Writing of this bird, which he names the "Citron-crested Cockatoo", Mr. W. C. Gedney says: "these birds are much more docile and less excitable than their relations, the Great White Cockatoo"—by which latter Mr. Gedney means the Australian Lemon-Crested Cockatoo (*Psittacus galeritus*).

Very little is known concerning these birds in their wild state, except that, like all the rest of the family, they breed in the holes of trees, where the female lays two or three white eggs on the bare wood, and has, usually, two broods in the season: we are not aware that they have ever bred in captivity, but we see no reason why they, as well as many of their congeners, should not do so, if placed in suitable quarters, with appropriate surroundings; whether it would be worth anyone's while to make the attempt, except as a matter of curiosity, is another question—we think not. Jardine, however, says: "In captivity the female sometimes produces eggs, and we have now specimens by us which were laid by one at rather peculiar periods, namely: the 21st. of June, 21st. of September, and 21st. of December; but whether this resulted from the peculiar economy of the bird, as acted upon by the seasons, or was the effect of the confinement, we are unable to determine."

The fact of the bird laying every three months on the same day

of the month, is certainly very singular, and we are of opinion that it was simply a coincidence and nothing more.

The food of this species is hemp and canary seed, oats and maize, the latter boiled, green food, such as watercress, endive, dandelions, and so on; they are also very fond of the flowers of mignonette, groundsel-tops, and the opening buds of the dandelion: they require water to drink, but "sop" is not fit for them, and milk or meat should never be given, as both meat and milk heat the blood of these birds, and cause skin irritation which impels the poor creatures to pluck out their feathers.

We dwell more particularly upon the latter point that many people hold a contrary opinion, and never allow their birds to drink, but force them to eat bread and milk sop.

It would be curious, and interesting, to trace the origin of the deeply-rooted prejudice that exists, in this country and in no other, as far as we can gather, against giving water to captive Parrots; but we have entirely failed to discover whence it arose, or when; but undoubtedly it must have been in the "dark ages" of bird-keeping, and we hope it will soon die out, although the authorities at the Zoological Gardens in London still cling to it in an illogical and fitful manner; for we have seen water allowed to the occupants of some cages in the "Parrot House", and withheld from others of the same species placed at the opposite end of the room. On questioning the keeper as to why water was not allowed, he seemed to be quite in the dark, and said he supposed it was in order to prevent the birds making a mess in their cages: which, certainly, is no sufficient reason for the actual and positive cruelty of keeping a bird, that naturally drinks, from access to water, and compelling it, although by nature a small eater, to swallow a large quantity of wet food for the sake of the moisture contained in it; and hence, without doubt, one cause of the very recent dates attached to most of the cages in the Parrot House at the, otherwise, admirably conducted Institution in the Regent's Park, familiarly known to so many visitors to London as the "Zoo".

We say "most of the cages" advisedly, for there is one veteran, a Black Madagascar Parrot (*Psittacus Vasa*), that has existed there, without water! for fifty-three years, having been presented to the Society in May, 1831! and must have been at least a year or two old then: at present this bird shows no sign of decrepitude, beyond a roughness of the plumage and a drooping of the wings.

Nevertheless, the fact of the survival of this veteran under what we cannot but consider most unfavourable conditions is no argument in favour of the system of diet pursued by its custodians, but, on the

contrary, against it. Let any candid reader imagine the sufferings that must have been endured by this poor creature, pent up in a small cage, in which it cannot much more than turn round, for so long a period, cramped for want of exercise and panting for a cooling drink during the many hot summer days when it has been forced to eat sop to repletion, for sake of the moisture necessary to slake its thirst. The picture is, really, too horrible for contemplation, and we trust may not be without effect in arousing public attention to what we cannot but consider a very great abuse.

The Lesser Lemon-crested Cockatoo is, by a majority of votes, pronounced to be an amiable and desirable subject for a lady's pet, docile and intelligent, not given to bite or scream, but, generally, good-tempered and well-disposed. So be it; we do not pretend to infallibility, and where we have been misinformed or misled, are not above acknowledging our error, and apologising for it.

We purpose, therefore, obtaining one, or a couple if we can, of these Cockatoos at the first favourable opportunity, and giving them a trial; when we hope to have a more favourable experience to record than has, so far, fallen to our lot in this connection.



ROSE-BREASTED COCKATOO.

ROSE-BREASTED COCKATOO.

Psittacus roseicapillus, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Cacatua roseicapilla*, *Ptilolophus roseicapillus*,
Eolophus roseus, etc. GERMAN: *Der rosenrothe Kakadu*.

THIS handsome but common bird is a native of the greater part of the Australian continent, and is, perhaps, one of the best known of its species in this country, where it has been imported in considerable numbers for many years past: the London Zoological Society having added an example to their collection as far back as the year 1843.

With the exception of the Leadbeater it is, unquestionably, the most beautiful member of the sub-family of the Cockatoos, and it is much to be regretted that it has few qualifications, beyond its delicate lavender grey coat, its rosy-red waistcoat, and its white head-dress just tinged with pink, to recommend it to the notice of amateurs.

The Cockatoos, as a rule, are not gifted with sweet voices, quite the contrary: but for an ear-piercing shriek, enough, after a few repetitions, to drive a sensitive person almost crazy, commend us to the Rosy Cockatoo.

Our experience of these birds has not been felicitous; but we are, nevertheless, unwilling to condemn the whole race for the shortcomings of a few individuals, and very possibly, nay very probably, or they would not command the ready sale they do, we have been unfortunate with our Rosy Cockatoos; still we must speak of them as we have found them, and with us they have not proved themselves teachable, or endearing in any way: one or two short words might be learned, but as to speaking, they never accomplished it; some of them have no doubt been tamed, but ours utterly repudiated the notion of reconciliation with their natural enemy man, and remained the most utter savages to the very last.

Mr. Wiener has also found this bird "stupid and uninteresting", and thinks its "screeching propensities will be less if kept in pairs";

which is, actually, the case; but even then, the capacity for noise possessed by these Cockatoos renders them, in our opinion, very far from being accounted a desirable acquisition in the aviary.

The long, broad tail, and hawk-like wings of the Rosy Cockatoo, seem to point to its true position with the *Platycerei*, but as it has the power of elevating at will the short round head feathers, it is usually classed with the Cockatoos.

There is no difference in either size or colour between the sexes, but the female can always be distinguished at a glance from her mate by her eye, which is chesnut brown, the iris of the male being jet black: a peculiarity to which we have already alluded in speaking of other members of the sub-family, and to which we believe we have been the first to direct attention.

In their wild state these birds, like all their congeners, nest in the hollow branches of the gum-trees in the vast forests where they live, and the female lays two or three white eggs, rather round in shape, and hatches them in about twenty-one days. With the exception of a pair belonging to Mr. Gedney, we are not aware that these birds have ever reproduced their species in this country, or on the continent of Europe: but that gentleman's account of his experience is so graphically told, that we must reproduce it in his own words; any attempt at condensation would utterly fail to do him justice.

"I was once compelled to act the part of 'wet-nurse' to a pair of baby Cockatoos of this species, whose mother had died, and whose father was so stricken with grief that he neglected the poor little fellows. They certainly were about as uninviting as anything in the baby line that I had ever seen, and even after chewing a cud of maize and shelled oats, it required a considerable amount of consideration before I could summon up sufficient enthusiasm to go through the process of feeding, yet it was a case of life or death, and—but no matter—I will spare my sensitive readers these unsavoury details. I fed the birds and my gentle little bantam hen, who happened to be broody at the time, performed the part of foster-mother to perfection. It is true that she resented the loss of her own eggs at the outset, and that her first look of intense horror and disgust when she saw the big-headed baby Cockatoos, sent me into a fit of ungovernable laughter, still their evident delight at the cheerful warmth of her body, and the ready manner in which they nestled, overcame her first feelings of compunction, and she adopted them as if they were her own. Of course I had to do the feeding, and as the youngsters required their meals at least once an hour at the outset, the bantam hen and her adopted children were kept in a hamper and placed within easy reach, whilst

my pockets contained a neat assortment of suitable food, which at regular intervals underwent the process of mastication, preparatory to being equally shared between my two baby Cockatoos. The trouble was certainly great, but the results were perfectly satisfactory."

"My young Cockatoos were very slow of growth, and required assistance in feeding until quite three months old, for although they would pick up stray bits of food, yet they greatly preferred to have it from the fingers of their owner. The absurdity of the performance between their foster-mother and themselves was highly amusing, for the bantam, who nursed them tenderly, would excite their hunger by picking up morsels of food and calling loudly to her adopted children, they immediately endeavoured to thrust their large beaks into her mouth, at which proceeding she would appear greatly astonished, and looking inquiringly, first at one and then at the other big-headed baby, she would take up the fallen scrap and go through the performance again with similar results. The little black hen eventually abandoned all attempts to feed her strange children, but she was very much attached to them, and a quaint trio they looked when basking together in the sunshine, the hen dusting herself, and the youngsters climbing about her body, in the vain endeavour to escape a shower of grit with which they were every now and then assailed. The early plumage of these birds was less brilliant than that of the adult, and the breast was, moreover, largely mottled with grey, but at twelve months old there was nothing by which to distinguish them from birds four times their age."

To the foregoing interesting account we can only add that it seems to us a pity that so much care and attention, both on the part of the human foster-father, and the bantam hen foster-mother, were wasted upon such unworthy subjects; had they been Goffins, indeed, or even Leadbeaters, but Rosy Cockatoos! We candidly confess we should not have taken the trouble.

The food of this species is identical with that recommended for the other members of this sub-family of the *Psittacidae* already described in these pages, namely: hemp, oats, maize, bread-crumbs (dry), biscuit, and green food of all kinds, excepting fresh lettuce and parsley; water, too, must not be forgotten; in fact, we can never too often reiterate the necessity of an abundant and pure supply of this essential element for Parrots of every kind; while milk and meat must be rigorously withheld, unless it be wished to see the poor birds pluck out their own feathers.

A stand seems to us preferable to a cage for any of the larger Parrots, Macaws, and Cockatoos; they have more liberty and a greater range on the former than in the latter, unless the cage be of such dimensions

as fairly to deserve the name of aviary, which is so often misapplied by fanciers: Mr. Wiener's recommendation, too, of keeping these birds in pairs, is worthy of consideration, and if their abode is of sufficient extent, and appropriately furnished with hollow logs, it is more than likely that Mr. Gedney's success in rearing Rosy Cockatoos in captivity will soon cease to be, as it is to-day, unique.

We shall not make the attempt, however, for we have not sufficient liking for the birds, but trust that our prejudice against them, ill-founded as it very possibly is, will not deter other aviarists from trying what they can do in this respect.

The Rosy Cockatoo is rather smaller than the Leadbeater, but looks less still in consequence of its head not being ornamented with a crest, which, when erect, adds very considerably to the height and appearance of the true Cockatoos, and gives them a bold and saucy air that is nevertheless very becoming, and causes the crestless Parrots to look comparatively insignificant by their side.

It is a thousand pities, a million rather, that this otherwise charming bird should rival even the peacock in hideous noisiness: but so it is, for "handsome is that handsome does", is, unfortunately for amateurs who look for beauty in their pets, and perhaps fortunately for the rosy one himself, not a proverb that in this instance can be applied with any degree of appositeness, for he is certainly handsome, but his conversation is most decidedly objectionable to the last degree; in fact, judging from the *venom* he throws into his shrieks, the stunned auditor can but conclude that the bird is cursing his jailor with all his might and main.

In his own native land though, among the aromatic gum-trees, the feathery foliaged acacias, the stiff grass-like forms of the native "she-oaks," and the huge ferns, which it is no misnomer to call trees, the Rosy Cockatoo is in his element, his sole appropriate place; cage him, and he is the square peg in the round hole, or, *vice versâ*, as the reader pleases.

Yes, a flock of Rosy Cockatoos playing among the branches, or seeking their food among the long "kangaroo-grass" of some untilled plain, or disporting themselves by the margin of a pond or creek, afford one of the prettiest sights it is possible to imagine; their noisy outcries are not so noticeable then, but mingle rather harmoniously as the altos in the great concert of nature, in which the cicalas, or locusts, take the treble parts; but the hours speed on their way, noon draws near, the birds retire to their camping trees, and almost every sound is hushed, only the cicalas continue to call to another from the gum-trees, and the White Cockatoos to scream from the cloudless depths of ether,

where they wheel round and round in untiring gyrations, safe from the attacks of every foe.

Capture the Rosy Cockatoo, however, take him from the maternal nest, even, in his babyhood, and bring him up by hand, what then? Well, he is out of place in your cage, or in your aviary, and he knows and feels it, and even when most tame, the *mal du pays* takes strong hold of it at times, and he is apt to bite, and to scream his loudest and most implacable scream as a protest against his thralldom: the chains may be gilded, it is true, but are they not chains all the same? and is it not cruel, not only to deprive him of his freedom, but to take him, by main force, and carry him away captive into a cold and sunless land, where gum-trees languish, and mimosas fade, and the tree-ferns droop their feathery fronds and die?

The Rosy Cockatoos are gregarious birds, assembling in small flocks, however, compared to those formed by their relations, the Great White-crested fellows that love to soar, far beyond the reach of unaided human sight, in the broad expanse of ethereal blue, bathed in the light of an Australian noon, when the air quivers as one may see it do over the mouth of a furnace, and the fiery rays of the sun pour down undimmed by a single fleecy cloud; then the rosy one seeks the shade of the forest, and dozes among the tops of the trees, apparently fearful lest the strong heat and vivid sunshine should fade the glory of his rosy vest, or may be blanch his lavender-coloured coat; for he is a great dandy, and never weary of preening and dressing his plumes, which in a cage look so often rough and untidy, as if the poor bird, with liberty, had lost heart, and personal pride, and cared only to pour forth the story of his woes and wrongs in the most ear-piercing strains.

With the exception of the Leadbeater there is no bird with which we are acquainted that "plays" so earnestly, or so gracefully as the Rosy Cockatoo; he is quite a gymnast too, and the way in which he swings himself round and round on his perch, with expanded wings and tail, is no less amusing than interesting: the love-making again of a pair of *Roseicapilli* is a sight to be seen: what a series of bows and capers, what tender, self-contained warbling! to hear him "coo" to his lady-love, you would never suppose him to be the pink fiend, whose piercing shrieks but just now drove you from his presence with your fingers in your ears: but he is: when he is teased he screams, when he is angry he screams, when he is hungry or thirsty he shrieks, but when he is jealous he yells like a demon—or as demons are supposed to yell—but when he has got what he wants, and is in a good humour, his "warbling", if loud, is not at all disagreeable, but that is so seldom, that, taught by experience, we prefer, on the whole, his room

to his company, and are content to leave the Rosy Cockatoo to sport in his native wilds, or, if imported, to add variety and charm to the aviaries of the Zoological Gardens.

The Hon. and Rev. F. G. Dutton's Account of the Rose-breasted Cockatoo.

THE Rose-breasted Cockatoo is perhaps the tamest of all the Cockatoos. It is the size of a Wood Pigeon, grey on the back, has a rather longer tail than most of the White Cockatoos, of a still darker grey. The breast is a pale rose colour, and the crest, which is not seen when the bird is not excited, is white.

Its bill, which is white, is smaller in proportion to its size than that of any other Cockatoo; but it is not to be despised as a weapon of offence, as the Rose-breasted Cockatoo can give a very nasty bite, if it is so disposed; and with anybody but its owner it very often is so disposed. All Cockatoos, as far as my experience goes, are not only inclined to be uncertain in temper, even turning round at times suddenly upon those they are fondest of, but are fond of mischief, liking to swoop down suddenly on people when flying at large (of course I only speak of pet birds let loose in England). But on the whole it is a gentle bird, and though it has the peculiarly disagreeable smell belonging to all the Cockatoo tribe, its lovely and graceful antics would make it one of the most charming of pets, were it not for its intolerable noisiness. All the Cockatoos I have known have been noisy; it is only a question of more or less, but with the Rose-breasted it is a case of more, not to say of most. It must be owing to this, quite as much as its hardness, which makes its price so low. So charming a bird would always obtain a good price, were it not that one Rose-breasted Cockatoo is enough to supply not only a street but a district. Its screams have been described as like "a little pig being killed." Its claws, too, are cuttingly sharp, so that if one takes it on one's hand, one has to wear gloves. It has a strong bold flight, owing to the immense length of its wings, and is rather apt to wander when given its liberty. In this respect it follows the habits of the genus *Palæornis* more than that of *Cacatua*.

It is a very hardy bird, and may be kept on hemp, canary, millet, and maize. It is very destructive, soon destroying its perch, and should always have a piece of loose wood, such as an old cotton reel, to play with.



SLENDER-BILLED COCKATOO

SLENDER-BILLED COCKATOO.

Psittacus nasica, Russ.

SYNONYMS: *Psittacus nasicus*, *Ptyctolophus tenuirostris*, *Cacatua nasica*, *Licmetis tenuirostris*, *Licmetis nasicus*, etc. GERMAN: *Der Nasenkakadu*.

IT is certainly a bad plan to allow oneself to be prejudiced by another person against anything of which one has no personal knowledge, and this we admit to have been our case with regard to the Slender-billed Cockatoo, of which Mr. Gedney wrote: "I confess to a feeling of dislike towards these birds, which nothing can overcome, not that I object to long-nosed creatures as a rule, for nature has been somewhat liberal to me in the matter of nose: but these Cockatoos are morose and spiteful in disposition, querulous, excitable, and uneasy in their manners when kept as cage pets, and strongly addicted to shrieking at all seasons."

So strong was our prejudice against this Cockatoo, engendered solely by a perusal of the above quoted remarks, that for a long time we refused to believe that anything good could be said of or for it: but we were mistaken, as we shall presently make it appear: not that we doubt Mr. Gedney's account of the individuals of the species that chanced to come into his possession, but, as in our own experience with the Rosy Cockatoo, his birds were probably unfortunate specimens of their race, and by no means to be considered as typical thereof.

Like the Rosy one, the Slender-billed has very little real claim to be called a Cockatoo, for he has no crest to speak of, but as he also has the power to raise the short head feathers, he has been placed in that branch of the Parrot family, which the older naturalists distinguished by the generic name *Ptyctolophus*; although as the reader of the list of synonyms placed at the head of this article will have doubtless noticed, these short-crested Cockatoos have been constituted a genus by themselves, and received the name of *Licmetis* from Wagler, Gray, and others; but to our notion Dr. Russ's plan of placing all the members

of the Parrot family, whether Cockatoos, Lories, Parrakeets, or Parrots proper, in one genus, presents so many advantages to the student of ornithology, that it would be impertinent to enlarge upon it here: where all are designated by the one generic appellation of *Psittacus*, the veriest tyro in natural history will see at a glance to what family a *Ptyctolophus*, *Brotogenis*, *Licmetis*, *Trichoglossus*, *Macrocerus*, *Calyptrorhynchus*, *Tanygnathus*, *Triclaria*, and *Palæornis* belongs; whereas under the old system the creatures so designated might, for all he could tell, be a kind of ostrich, humming-bird, or baboon even, instead of a variety of Parrot.

The general colour of this bird is white, but the forehead and face are reddish, a tinge of the same colour is apparent on the vent, and a patch of blue bare skin surrounds the eye; the beak is white, and the upper mandible extraordinarily prolonged, whence some of the creature's names, both English and scientific.

When in their wild state the Slender-billed Cockatoos, in addition to preying voraciously on the ripening crops of the farmer, feed on various kinds of bulbous plants, the roots of which they dig with much expertness out of the hard sun-baked soil of Australia, and do not disdain a good fat wood-grub as an occasional relish, particularly during the breeding season.

Like all the rest of the Parrots they make no nest, but the female lays two or three white eggs on the soft wood of some hollow bough, and hatches them in about twenty-one days; there are usually two broods in the season, and the young do not attain their full growth until they are at least a year old.

The ordinary Slender-billed Cockatoo is a native of southern and south-western and eastern Australia, but a kindred species, showing much more red in various parts of the plumage is found in the north, and was particularly common, according to the late John Gould, in the vicinity of Port Easington.

As a proof that hasty conclusions affecting an entire race should be cautiously drawn from observations embracing only a limited number of individuals belonging thereto, we may here insert an account of a Slender-billed Cockatoo, which we have recently received from a lady of our acquaintance; and if objection should be taken, and the remark made that this favourable view of the character of the Slender-billed one is not more likely to be universally correct, than the unfavourable one with which we opened this paper, we reply that no doubt the truth lies between the two extremes, and that as another lady observed, when informed that the person with whom she was conversing was an Irishman, "Ah! well, there are good and bad in every country."

"By the way", writes the correspondent to whom we referred above, "neither you nor Mr. Gedney give the Slender-billed Cockatoo a good character, and yet my 'Toby', who is, I believe, a 'Nosey', is the dearest, funniest old fellow that ever lived! Only he does scream sometimes, when he is either offended, or frightened, but then he talks. When first I had him, he knew, I should think, about twenty sentences, and never misapplied them; now he has become a greater mimic than talker; daily he goes through the performance of pouring out tea. The sugar is first put into the cups—the action of putting it in, you understand—and then the tea is poured out; his beak being the spout of the tea-pot, and he makes the noise of pouring exactly, while pretending to do so. Yet no one is allowed to see all his funny little doings, but his own home party; because, like all estimable characters, Toby keeps the best for home. One morning, from an old ladder that is devoted to his use in the garden, he watched the gardener clipping the laurels, and when he came in, we had the whole performance of clipping laurels gone through exactly, giving his head a little jerk with each snap of the shears—his beak was of course supposed to be those implements—and the sound was exact. Is it not Lady Brassey who speaks of a Cockatoo of this sort in one of her books? a Cockatoo that imitated actions of all kinds, could sew, and had the toothache, or was supposed to have, putting up his 'hand', and rocking about, as he had seen his mistress doing, when suffering from that disagreeable complaint. I do not know whether it is general with all Cockatoos, but my Toby likes almost everything served up warm. He eats and drinks very nearly what we do, and it certainly seems to suit him, for no Cockatoo could be in better health."

To the latter part of the above extremely interesting account of a remarkable Cockatoo, we can but say that, to us, it seems injudicious to feed one of these birds as described, and that the mixed diet given to him without causing any deterioration in health, is due to the free life he leads in our friend's garden.

In a subsequent letter our correspondent, continuing her account of "Toby", says: "One of his cleverest tricks I did not mention, it is this: 'The children's hour' with us is Toby's hour, in which he is taken out of his cage and petted, and played with. The striking of a match to light the lamp is his signal for retiring. He has taken a fancy to doing this, and as soon as the match-box appears, he strikes his match, 'Click! fizz!' and up goes his head, with the exact imitation of the sound and action."

Really such a bird is quite a phenomenon, and we shall have, in future, much more respect for the abilities and capacity of the Slender-billed

one than we used to have: but to generalize from particulars is bad logic, and, as we have already remarked in this connection, birds have their several idiosyncrasies as well as ourselves, and vary as much in their respective characters and dispositions as men do.

These birds have the recommendation of being extremely hardy, and care nothing for the inclemencies of our severest winters, roosting preferably out of doors, when in a garden aviary, to seeking the covered-in portion of their abode: in the matter of their diseases we are quite without experience, for we have never seen one of them ill, and believe that they are among the most enduring of their race.

In addition to the Port Essington Slender-bill, there is a larger bird of the same description that is a native of the Islands to the north of Australia; it is occasionally to be met with in captivity, but is very generally confounded with the species under consideration, from which it differs in no other respect than size. An individual of this variety, the divergence of type is not sufficient to constitute it a distinct species, that once came under our notice, seemed a very intelligent quiet old fellow: he had passed a good many years in captivity in a round Parrot-cage, and had probably out-lived his recollections of a free life in the woods and forests of his native isle, for often as we have been in his company, we never heard him scream, and his disposition, at all times, was the same, placid and apparently contented: he seemed to derive much pleasure and satisfaction from having his head scratched, and would remain under the operation as long as his visitor had the patience to rub, first one side, and then the other of his "poll." He was not much of a linguist, was "Cocky"; his own name, and the monosyllable "Well?" uttered interrogatively, was about the extent of his accomplishments in this direction: but his quietude and amiability, in spite of his ungainly appearance, for when all has been said and done, the Slender-billed Cockatoo is not a pretty bird, almost made us envy his owner his possession; for at that time our great pet, and first favourite, was a splendid Goffin, who was noisy and talkative to an extreme degree, and the contrast between the two was remarkable.

Goffin's beauty, however, more than counterbalanced his noisiness in our estimation, and the great Slender-billed one's ugliness could not be overlooked, even for the sake of his amiable docility. So true it is, that, in this world, appearance, if not exactly everything, goes a long way towards getting the fortunate possessor excused a number of not always minor faults.

During the breeding season the Slender-billed Cockatoos separate into pairs, making their home in the hollow branches of the loftiest gum-trees they can find; we remember once seeing several of them

in the tree tops on the Plenty Ranges in Victoria, and—tell it not in Gath—firing at them, although it was the height of their breeding-season; but so tall were those *eucalyptii*, that our charge of large duck-shot did not even bring down a leaf, and of course the birds flew away to a short distance with a series of shrieks that sounded uncommonly like derisive laughter.

Had we known what age the young ones were we should, in spite of its diameter of nearly four feet, have cut down that forest giant that, in one of its hollow arms, held the dearest treasure of those Cockatoos; but we did not know: the young ones might be only just hatched, and it would be a pity to take them, for they would not live, or there might only be eggs, which would have been certain to have got broken in the fall, so we left the grand old tree standing, and we hope it yet rears its head towards heaven, o'ertopping all its fellows, as it did in those far-off times.

Ay de mi! we were young and careless then, but the weird beauty of those lonely sylvan scenes, peopled with "strange bright birds of purple wing," as some poet has it, vocal with the mimic chant of the Menura, the delusive tinkling of the bell-bird, the incessant demands of the bald-head, monk- or friar-bird to know the hour of the day: "what o'clock, what o'clock!" and at night resounding with the shrill screams of the phalanger, the hoarse-grunting squeak of the opossum, and the angry vociferations of the great night-jar for the restoration of the dainty morsel of which, according to a colonial tradition, he had been deprived by some vagrant Jew, "Ma Pork, Ma Pork", impresses itself upon our recollection with a vividness and intensity that no lapse of time, or distance has yet been able to efface or even to impair.

But we are forgetting our friend of the slender-bill, the dainty feeder on the choicest orchidaceous bulbs, no less than on the tender corn of the settler, who bears poor "nosey" even less good-will than he has won at the hands of the earliest writer on foreign cage-birds in this land of ours. Yes: he is fond of roots, and an adept at digging them out of the hard soil, for in Australia, tree orchids, that is orchids growing on trees, are the exception, and not the rule, as in Tropical America, the head-quarters of their race, and his long bill, that otherwise seems so disproportionate and out of place, stands him in good stead, both of pickaxe and shovel, and should he find, as no doubt he often does, a grub, or chrysalis of coleoptera or moth, he will be quite certain not to let it go a-begging. Nevertheless, in captivity, he will do very well without insect food, and, in point of fact, a very great deal better, because too succulent a diet is apt to arouse feelings and passions that are better left quiescent, unless a partner is presented

to him, and it is wished that he should reproduce his kind, which, so far as we can learn, he has never yet done in captivity.

"N'e'veillez pas le chat qui dort": is a good old French proverb, which has its equivalent in our English saying "Let sleeping dogs lie," and we would commend both to the consideration of those of our readers who are possessed of pet Parrots, Macaws, or Cockatoos; never give your birds any stimulating food, you will excite them if you do, and finding no legitimate outcome for their feelings, they will, literally, turn to and rend themselves to pieces, plucking out every feather on their bodies they can reach, and leaving themselves as bare as Plato's "biped", of which we remember having read.



COCKATIEL.

COCKATIEL.

Psittacus Novæ-Hollandiæ, Russ.

SYNONYMS: *Palæornis Novæ-Hollandiæ*, *Leptolophus auricomis*,
Nymphacus Novæ-Hollandiæ, *Calopsitta Novæ-Hollandiæ*, GOULD.

GERMAN: *Dër Nymfensittich*. FRENCH: *La perruche calopsitte*.

THIS quietly pretty bird upon whom naturalists have imposed such a multiplicity of names, but which is now very generally designated Cockatiel, a word signifying little Cockatoo, is not, properly speaking, a member of the sub-family of the *Ptyctolophæ*, but rather takes rank with the Grass Parrakeets, themselves nearly related to the Ground Parrots, as is evidenced by the length of its legs, and the facility with which it walks and runs on the ground.

The plumage of the Cockatiel, without being beautiful, is strikingly pretty and effective, affording, as it does, such bold contrasts of colour; the general hue of the plumage is ashen grey, darker on the upper than on the under surface of the body; the shoulders and outer edges of the wings are pure white, the crest, which the bird has not the power of elevating and depressing at will, like the true Cockatoos, and the face are citron yellow in the male, but grey in the female, and on the centre of the cheek, in both sexes, occurs a patch, about the size of a thumb-nail, of brick red; the under surface of the tail is black in the male, but in the female prettily barred and mottled with yellow. The upper surface of the tail and the rump of the female are barred and marked in the manner the French term *zébré*, with streaks and lines of a lighter shade of the uniform grey of the plumage, giving the bird a mottled appearance, while in the male the same parts present one uniform tint of deep slate grey, so that there is no difficulty in distinguishing the sexes from each other.

The young of both sexes have the under surface of the tail barred like that of their mother, but even when leaving the nest the young

males can be distinguished from their sisters by having a perceptible shade of yellow on the head and face.

In their wild state these birds seldom have more than two broods in the season, but in domesticity, when they are relieved of all apprehension on the score of food, they keep on breeding pretty well all the year round, except in the depth of winter; but the young that are hatched late in the autumn, or in the beginning of spring, are not always successfully reared.

The total length of the Cockatiel is eleven inches, of which the tail measures five.

Like all the Parrot tribe, the Cockatiel makes its nest in the hollow bough of a tree, where it lays a considerable number of eggs, seldom less than five, often seven, and not unfrequently nine, which it hatches in twenty-one days from the date of the deposition of the last of the batch. The male is a most attentive father, sitting on the eggs all day, from five or six o'clock in the morning, during summer, to four or five in the evening, seldom leaving them for more than a few minutes occasionally to get a little food; but when he thinks he has done his duty he comes off, and if the hen, as sometimes happens, appears unwilling to take up her position in the nest, a grand scolding match takes place, and now and then a regular fight. "It is too bad!" he screams, "there, I have been sitting all day, and you have been out enjoying yourself in the sunshine, and now, when I am faint and hungry, and the daylight almost gone, you will not do your duty, but let the precious eggs get cold! it is too bad I declare, go in at once, O wife, go in I say." And if madame does not at once take up her post on the eggs, he chases her about, pecking her sharply, and scolding vehemently all the time; until at last, fatigued by his importunities, if not obeying the call of duty, she pops into the box, settles herself down on her eggs, and he, giving a congratulatory chuckle, flies off to the seed-pan, and makes up for lost time by eating voraciously for several minutes, when he repairs to the water-bottle and has a good drink, then he plumes himself for a little while, and then it is time to go to bed.

When the young are hatched, however, the lady spends most of her time with them for the first two or three days, during which period she alone appears to feed them; then, as the youngsters get stronger and bigger, she pays less and less attention to them, and the purveying to their wants devolves more and more upon their father; for usually, sometimes long before they have left the nest, she begins to lay again, and these eggs are actually hatched by their elder brothers and sisters, as much as by the parent birds themselves.

That these birds, as we have said, breed in hollow boughs in their own country is without doubt, but ours preferred a box with half a cocoa-nut husk cemented in it: although capable of giving a severe bite, we have not observed in the Cockatiel that passionate desire for whittling so common in the Parrot family, but, on the contrary, an evident disinclination to burrow and scoop out wood, so that possibly, if solid logs only, though ever so rotten, were given them, that was the reason a recent writer's birds preferred nesting on the ground, to taking the trouble to hollow out a dwelling for themselves, or even to enlarging a burrow that had been partially prepared for them.

The food of this species consists mainly of grass-seeds in their native wilds, and in captivity they seem to prefer canary-seed to any other, but when they have young ones to feed, they will eat, and seem to require, oats and bread-crumbs, soaked in cold water as well as dry, but not hard. The Cockatiel is undoubtedly a lazy bird, at least becomes so under domestication, and will never do for himself anything that he can get his owner to do for him. Thus in the matter of feeding the young ones, there can be no doubt that in their native woods the parent birds forage far and near to provide their progeny with food, but in the bird-room or aviary, unless the food is just to their taste, and placed where they can readily reach it, they will rather let the young ones starve, than take the least trouble to fill their hungry little bellies, for they will not eat enough seed to feed both themselves and their young ones, but prefer to gobble up a quantity of bread, which does not need much preparation, and if a supply of this food fails, we have found that the young birds suffer.

Although good walkers and quick runners, the Cockatiels are also strong on the wing, and circle round and round their domicile, in a bold and graceful manner, when let out for a fly: this is an accomplishment they learn quickly, but had better be taught in the country than in London, where such multitudes of cats are ever on the look out for a morsel, and have no more scruple in pouncing on the most valuable exotic bird that, unfortunately, falls in their way, than on the dirtiest and most disreputable of cockney sparrows.

Cockatiels are healthy and long-lived birds, enduring for quite a number of years; a male that has been in our possession for the last ten years, and we have no idea of his age at the time when he became an inmate of our aviary, appears, as we write, to be in the perfection of health and vigour: married to his third wife since he has lived with us, he is now busily engaged in providing for the wants of a young family, and seems to enter as heartily into the discharge of his important duties as ever he did.

Last summer the poor fellow had a delicate wife that often suffered, and eventually died from egg-binding, to which fell disease his first spouse was also a victim, and took upon himself more than his own share of the onerous duty of providing for the exceptionally large family of seven young Cockatiels, so that he became quite weak and ill, so much so that we were fearful we were about to lose him; but his task accomplished, Richard was soon himself again, and actively preparing to rear another brood, when, one morning after a severe storm, we found the poor invalid wife stretched lifeless on the floor of the aviary.

For days after "Joey" seemed utterly disconsolate, and was incessantly calling for his partner, in tones that sounded exactly like a plaintive imitation of the words "O wife, wife, wife, wife!" until it became so perfectly heartrending to listen to his outcries, that we procured him "another", to whom he was a considerable time before he grew thoroughly reconciled; but "Time", says the proverb, "heals and consoles", and after a few days, he first endured, and then embraced the substitute, who is now the happy mother of his youngest sons, or daughters; it is, as yet, impossible to say to which of the sexes the little yellow balls of fluff in the nest-box belong.

The Cockatiel is a noisy bird, but his notes are not so shrill as those of many of his congeners, though they lack the sweetness of the Red-rump's tones; but his partner is a very silent bird, seldom giving vent to a little ghost of a shriek, or hissing hoarsely, like a young owl, when disturbed from her nest. The young hiss as well as their mother, and that from a very early age.

It is almost superfluous to add here that the young of all the Parrot tribe do not gape, but are fed, as pigeons feed, by the old ones disgorging half-digested food from their own crops into the beaks of the babies, which they take into their own, both old and young making a pumping kind of motion, a bowing and scraping as one might say during the operation. And yet, such is the cimmerian darkness prevailing, even in high quarters, as to the domestic habits of birds, that, recently, we saw a picture, drawn by an eminent artist too, of a nestful of young Parrots, gaping as widely as a parcel of young thrushes might do, while they were being crammed by their parents with what looked like currant-buns, but was probably intended to represent some kind of fruit!

Taken, when about half-fledged, from the nest, and brought up by hand, or rather by mouth, the young male Cockatiel becomes the most charming pet that can be imagined: in point of fact there is scarcely any accomplishment that he cannot be taught; he will perform all manner of little tricks, such as kissing his mistress, pretending to be

dead, flying out of window, and returning at the word of command; and he will also learn to repeat, with great distinctness, not only words, but short sentences, and even to imitate, in a disconnected and rambling fashion it is true, the chattering of his compatriot the Budgerigar, or the warbling of his rival the Canary. It is no use taking the trouble to bring up a hen Cockatiel by hand, for she is not intellectual, which is, no doubt, her misfortune, and never learns any thing; at least such is our experience of her, and we would not willingly say so of any person of her sex, had we not proved the truth of our assertion in several instances: we cannot even say that she is an exemplary mother, for we have never found her so; on the contrary, she seems to think that when she has laid her eggs, sat on them in the dark, and nursed the young ones during the first three or four days of their existence, she has done all that can possibly be demanded of her: and perhaps, after all, she is not so far wrong, for the more people do, the more is expected from them, and if her husband is satisfied, who else has any right to complain?

That he is satisfied with his wife, poor fellow, is very evident, not only by the care he bestows upon their offspring, but by the fuss he makes about the lady herself when she is not very well, and the care with which he combs her head and crest, when they are courting previous to the deposition of another batch of eggs; and if he does scold, as we have said, when she refuses to take her turn on those valuable productions, it is less from any real resentment against her, than from fear than the precious eggs themselves should take cold.

In warm weather the young fledge very rapidly, leaving the nest in about three weeks fully grown and able, after a day or two of liberty, to provide for their own wants at the seed-pan; but in cold weather, in the short days of spring and autumn, when morning and evening are chilly, and the night too often frosty, they really seem not to grow at all; so that if it be wished to rear the brood, the whole party, old and young, father, mother, and children, had better all be taken indoors together, and placed in an apartment where the temperature is not permitted to fall below 55° Fahr.; and in such a situation, not only will that brood be successfully reared, but another will be hatched, and similarly brought up, before the indefatigable parents think of taking a rest to moult.

Seed, we have said, constitutes the principal food of these birds, which are fond also of bread, and all kinds of green vegetables, from the flowering tufts of grass that grow by the wayside, to common lettuce and prosaic cabbage, the flowering tops of which last seem to afford them extreme delight. We may here mention, or rather repeat,

that lettuce should never be given to captive birds until it has become "wilted", as the Americans say, in the sun, or even been kept a day or two in the house. Some Cockatiels we once kept in an aviary along with a pair of Red-crested Cardinals, were accustomed to partake so largely of the insect food, black beetles, mealworms, caterpillars, tipulæ, etc., provided for the use of the latter, that we were compelled to remove them; which inclines us to the belief that in their wild state the Cockatiels, like many other members of the Parrot tribe, are by no means averse to an occasional tit-bit in the shape of a fat grub, a white ant or two, or any other succulent insect morsel they may chance to fall in with; but in captivity they do perfectly well without such exceptional dainties; we are, however, without any data as to their habits in this respect in their native wilds, and the insect-eating proclivities of our Cockatiels may quite as well have been an instance of depraved appetite, as a reversion to an ancestral and natural habit.

With other birds, large and small, the Cockatiel agrees perfectly: in fact it permits itself to be shamefully bullied by a pert male Budge-rigar, or a saucy Red-rump, without the least attempt at retaliation, and may be kept, with entire safety to the small fry, in company with even the tiniest of the Astrilds, or ornamental Finches. The only approach we ever saw on the part of any Cockatiel to aggressive behaviour was in our favourite "Joey", who, on the introduction into his domain of a solitary Madagascar Love-bird, flew at the stranger with out-stretched wings and opened beak, so that we immediately placed ourselves in readiness to rescue *Agapornis cana*, should need be for our interference: but there was none, for Joey, having apparently satisfied himself that the stranger was not a dangerous personage, gave himself no further trouble about him, and he has lived ever since with the Cockatiel family in peace and amity.

These birds are not, as far as we are aware, given to forming friendships, much less matrimonial alliances, with birds of another species; but we were once shown a curious looking creature, that was said to be a hybrid between a female Red-rump and a male Cockatiel, to which latter bird it certainly bore more resemblance than to the former; but this is the only instance that has come to our knowledge of such a *mesalliance* on the part of our exemplary friend the Cockatiel.



BLUE MOUNTAIN LORY.

BLUE MOUNTAIN LORY.

Psittacus Swainsonii, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Trychoglossus Swainsonii*, *Psittacus Novæ Hollandiæ* (*hæmatodus* var. γ), *Psittacus hæmatodus*, *Psittacus cyanogaster*, *Trichoglossus hæmatodus*, *Trichoglossus multicolor*, *Trichoglossus Novæ Hollandiæ*, etc. GERMAN: *Der Lori Von den Blauen Bergen*.

FRENCH: *La peruche à tête bleue*, LE VAIL.

WITH the exception of the Paradise Parrakeet, which we consider to be a very near relation of the species under consideration, we know of no bird that has given rise to so much embittered controversy between amateurs, and to so much divergence of opinion among authors, as the beautiful bird that has been erroneously named the Blue Mountain Lory, seeing that it is an inhabitant of the vast plains of the interior of New South Wales, and not at all a native of the hills to the westward of Sydney, upon which the early settlers, looking at them from a distance of many miles, bestowed the name of the Blue Mountain range.

The Blue Mountain Lory is one of the handsomest, not only of the Australian Parrots, but takes foremost place among the most gorgeously appavelled members of the family that are to be met with in any part of the world. It is about the same length as the Cockatiel, namely, eleven or twelve inches, but is of stouter build than that graceful bird, and has a shorter tail.

The head and throat are purplish blue, the nape of the neck greenish yellow, the breast bright red, the belly blue, and all the rest of the body brilliant green, the under surface of the central tail feathers is yellow, the beak reddish orange, and the feet lead colour.

The female cannot with any certainty be distinguished from her mate, but is usually a very little smaller, though not invariably so.

The feathers of the head and neck are long and very narrow, and

lie closely together; the under wing coverts are vermilion red; the claws are strong and hooked, and the tarsi rather short, indicating arboreal habits, and in fact the Blue Mountain seldom descends to the ground, but passes the greater part of its life among the gum-trees (*Eucalypti*), upon the pollen and nectar of which it principally subsists; but in times of scarcity it will also eat grass-seeds, and is never averse to a little insect food, for want of which, we believe, it often dies prematurely in captivity.

Dr. Russ mentions that a pair which were obtained from a London dealer in 1870 for two hundred and ten marks (ten guineas), were the first of these birds that were imported, but the London Zoological Society had obtained some of them two years previously, in 1868; for a long time, however, they remained at a high price, and even now a pair will fetch £3 in the bird-market, though occasionally an odd specimen, the mate of which has died, may be picked up for a much less sum.

Beautiful although he most undoubtedly is, the Blue Mountain Lory is not an encouraging bird to keep, for, although the odds against his living are not quite so high as Mr. Gedney would make it appear (100 to 1), he requires some amount of care and attention to preserve him in health for any length of time. Mr. Wiener, however, does not consider him either delicate or difficult to keep; and Dr. Russ gives the names of four German amateurs who have successfully bred him. Notwithstanding all this testimony in his favour, we warn amateurs to beware of the Blue Mountain Lory: dealers will tell them that he can be kept without the least trouble on a diet of seed only: so he can—for a time; but after a while he will be found dead on the floor of his cage or aviary some morning—cause, a fit, the result of constipation from deprivation, for too lengthened a period, of his favourite food, pollen and nectar, not forgetting the insects of which, in his wild state, he pretty frequently partakes.

Dr. Russ recommends the following diet:—"Canary-seed, millet, hemp; and oats, with 'egg-bread', boiled rice, fresh or soaked ants' eggs, sweet ripe fruit, cherries, berries of different kinds, grapes, dates, figs, etc."

Mr. Wiener's bill of fare is very similar: "I would advise", says this gentleman, "to feed these birds on a mixture of canary-seed, oats, millet, Indian corn, and hemp-seed, giving daily in addition either a piece of sponge-cake, a little sweetened boiled rice, a couple of dates or figs, or some ripe fresh fruit."

The same author speaking of a female Blue Mountain Lory, formerly in his possession, and which, after passing from his hands, survived

for six years in the aviary of a friend, "laying several eggs, though kept singly", tells us that it was fed on, "besides canary-seed and maize, a little sugar, with occasionally a morsel of raw beef scraped very fine, and mixed with scraped carrot."

Insect food seems to us to be indispensable for the well-being of these birds, and in addition to the dietary prescribed by Dr. Russ and Mr. Wiener, we would recommend mealworms and ants' eggs, or, failing these, gentles well scoured in bran; the latter insects are readily obtainable, and may be kept in the pupa stage all through the winter in a cellar, or cool plant-house, buried in sand.

Like all the Parrot family these Lories breed in hollow boughs, where the female deposits from three to four white eggs, about the same size as those of the Cockatiel, upon which she sits for twenty-one days: the young, from the first, resemble their parents closely, but are a trifle less brilliantly coloured.

"The Blue Mountain Lory is an extremely active, graceful, and handsome bird, but has a most abominable shriek", says Dr. Russ; a statement which Mr. Wiener corroborates in the following terms:—"His noise, however, is nearly as disagreeable as his plumage is beautiful." While Mr. Gedney, on the contrary, declares that it "has a soft agreeable note, and seldom indulges in any objectionable noises."

For our own part we agree with the former, rather than with the last testimony as to the vocal powers, or abilities of the Blue Mountain, whose voice we consider to be particularly harsh and unpleasing; but of course tastes differ, and a note that jars unpleasantly on one man's ear, may have an agreeable and soothing effect upon another.

We look upon these birds as most decidedly quarrelsome, and unfit to be trusted in a mixed company. Dr. Russ, however, considers that "in a bird-room with small birds they are not dangerous, but they must not be kept with other Parrots."

Like most Parrots," says Mr. Wiener, in this connection, "the Blue Mountain Lory can only be kept with other Parrots at considerable risk, and I had to learn that two males put in one cage under the impression of being a pair can kill each other."

Mr. Gedney again seems to have been peculiarly happy in his specimens, for of them he remarks, "But for the terribly sudden death which so soon overtakes these birds, they would be the most charming feathered pets that a lady could possess, for they have neither the power nor the inclination to bite savagely."

The same writer's recommendation to feed this Lory "exclusively upon soft food, in which honey forms a prominent part", doubtless in great measure accounts for his advice to those of his readers "whose

susceptible natures would be shocked" by the sudden death of their favourite, "not to become the owner of a Blue Mountain Lory", for it is undeniable that they would not, and could not, long survive on "sweet sop" alone; in fact "sop" is an injudicious article of diet for any bird. If bread is given, it should be the crumb of a sweet white loaf, two days old, soaked for ten minutes, or thereabouts, in *cold* water, squeezed, and renewed at least twice a day; but Parrots can not, any more than men, live on bread alone, and require, the Lory sub-family especially, a varied diet as already recommended.

Parrot "tins" are an abomination, for they can never be cleaned properly, and should not be used: delf-ware is far preferable, or enamelled iron-ware, both of which can be scalded and kept sweet, with comparatively little difficulty or trouble.

Mr. Gedney indeed says: "Those fanciers who become the owners of such birds (as the Blue Mountain) must be prepared to devote nearly as much care and attention to them as would be required by a newly-born child"; but he indulges in hyperbole here, for it is manifest that they do not and cannot, except perhaps in the matter of food, and scarcely there, for the preparation of food for a young child that is being attempted to be brought up by hand, is a far more serious affair, than the feeding of a couple of Lories as Dr. Russ or Mr. Wiener recommends; though where their diet is made to consist of "sop," we confess that much difficulty will be experienced in preventing that old fashioned article of infantine and *Psittacidean* diet from turning sour, when adieu to the chance of keeping either Parrot or child alive.

These birds are veritable honey-eaters, but unlike most of their congeners, they also partake of seeds, and moreover consume a considerable proportion of insect food, so that a due admixture of seeds, honey, fruit and animal food is necessary to maintain them not only in health, but in life: exclusively confined to any one of the above articles of food, these birds would certainly not long survive.

See to it then, owners of Blue Mountain Lories; let your birds have suitable food provided for them, and you will find that the authorities who pronounce these birds to be "not delicate", are right; while those who tell you that they will not live long in captivity are not wrong, for they belong to an obstinate race, these Blue Mountains, and prefer to "shuffle off this mortal coil" prematurely, to living on an unpalatable and unsuitable diet.

When dealers assure you that they keep these birds on seed, the statement must be accepted *cum grano*: doubtless they give them seed, and ought to do so, but they provide them with other food in addition to dry seed, upon which, however, the birds can subsist for a time,

or they would very soon, as the dealers perfectly well know, soon have no Lories to keep.

Yet Blue Mountain Lories are unsatisfactory birds on the whole, for such as care about a little extra trouble, that is to say; but they are very beautiful, if not gifted with sweet voices; and though cruel to their captive companions, are amiable enough with their master or mistress, and not at all deserving of unconditional disapproval. In the country they readily learn to fly out and return at the word of command, and a little liberty when the lime trees are in blossom, or the gorse gilds the common with its myriad blooms, will enable the Blue Mountain to lay in a stock of health and vigour that will stand him in good stead for many days.

Mignonette in flower, groundsel-tops, dandelion blooms, cabbage blossoms, will be appreciated and gratefully received; hawthorn, too, apple and pear blossoms, if the latter can be spared, wallflowers, and, generally, such flowers as contain honey, especially clover, are good for these birds; but beware of the golden panicles of the laburnum, for they contain a deadly poison, as do the seeds, bark, roots, and even the leaves of that beautiful and most graceful tree.

No one can keep a Blue Mountain with the amount of care and attention sufficient to preserve a White Cockatoo in the rudest of health; but it is a libel on a beautiful bird to say that he cannot be kept at all—he can: try it, O reader! follow the plan we have recommended, and you will have your reward.

*The Hon. and Rev. F. G. Dutton's account of the
Blue Mountain Lory.*

THIS bird may divide the palm of beauty with the Beautiful Parakeet (*Psephotus pulcherrimus*) amongst the Australian Parrots, and would be a charming pet, but for its noisiness and its dirty habits.

But before I take away its character in this latter respect, I ought to add that I have never kept a pair trained to eat seed. I fed mine, as I fed my Purple-capped Lories, on dried figs soaked in hot water till they could be mashed into a pulp, mixed with soaked bun, and the whole made rather moist. I find the Lory tribe thrive on this food, but then it makes their droppings constant, fluid and very offensive. I am bound to say that a well-known dealer has shown me these birds living on canary-seed, whose plumage looked the picture of health, and whose cages were, for Parrots, very clean; yet I observed that even he did not venture to feed his Ceram, and Purple-capped Lories on

seed; and although he declared that the birds fed on soft food were liable to fits, and those fed on seed were not, it seems difficult to accept the statement without long and close observation.

That Parrots have great power of changing their food, the remarkable instance of the Ka-Ka (*Nestor notabilis*), which has become carnivorous within the memory of man, proves. But what a bird can do with impunity at liberty is very different from what it can do in confinement. Even the Ka-Ka itself is found at the Zoological Gardens to prefer a frugivorous diet when it has a choice, and there can be no doubt that the structure of the Blue Mountain's tongue points out for it a more or less fluid food. Now it is very well known that the fits of which aviary birds generally die are apoplectic, and it is also well known that anything like obstruction is a pre-disposing cause to apoplexy. It does not seem likely therefore that to give a bird, accustomed to relaxing food, one which has the very opposite effect will make it less liable to apoplexy. On the other hand, I must bear witness that the Blue Mountains I saw eating looked the picture of robust health. Granted that the seed diet is the best for them, and they at once become charming birds for an aviary. Their incessant activity and amusing ways, together with their extreme beauty, make them birds that it is always a pleasure to watch. They also are very fond of bathing, and I confess that I have a partiality to birds which tub well.

But they are not very suited to a room. Their cries, which are very ear-piercing, are pretty nearly as incessant as their movements. I should think they would be capital birds to turn loose, if one had a pair tame enough to start with, but I have never tried them in this way, as the pair I had were not tame, though they were not timid.

I know not whether they breed in England: they have been bred in captivity at the Cape.

As pretty nearly every bird which is caged can be taught to speak, I have no doubt Blue Mountains could be, but I never have heard of one which talked.

I should perhaps add that owing to the dirty habits of my Blue Mountains, combined with their noisiness, I only kept them a few months. During that time they never had the sign of an ailment.



PURPLE-CAPPED LORY.

PURPLE-CAPPED LORY.

Psittacus atricapillus, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Lorius domicella*, *Lorius orientalis indicus*,
Domicella atricapilla. GERMAN: *Der schwarzkäppige Lori*.

FRENCH: *Perroquet lori à collier jaune*, LE VAIL.

THE very charming Parrot which forms the subject of the present notice is, perhaps, more frequently and more successfully kept in domesticity than any of the Indian members of the Lory sub-family of the *Psittacidae*, a distinction it owes no less to its beautiful plumage, docility, and amiable character, than to its acknowledged hardness.

The latter is of course a comparative quality, and when we say that the Purple-cap is hardy, we do not wish it to be understood that it is as easily kept as a great White Cockatoo, as any person misinterpreting our meaning, would soon discover to his cost: but among the Lories it is hardy, rivalling the Blue Mountain in this respect; and, although we are not aware that it has ever bred in captivity, we have personal knowledge of solitary females laying eggs on the floor of their cage, and evincing a strong desire to incubate.

The nesting of this species is identical with that common to the rest of the family; a hollow bough is chosen, and the three or four white eggs are laid on the bare wood, and the young make their appearance in the outer world about six weeks after the laying of the first egg, and never return to their nursery again.

The Purple-capped Lory is a native of the Moluccas and adjacent islands, from whence it is yearly imported in increasing numbers, as its mode of treatment and excellent qualities as a domestic pet, are better understood. Its length is about eleven inches, of which the short tail measures four inches. The general or ground colour is scarlet, a yellow collar decorates the breast, the wings are green, and the points of the shoulders blue, the top of the head is purple, of so deep a shade

as in some lights to appear black, and the tail feathers are edged with a yellow border.

The female closely resembles the male, and can only be distinguished from him by comparison; but this makes little difference, unless it be desired to secure a pair for breeding purposes, for she is quite as clever as her mate, learning to speak, not only words, but long sentences, to imitate domestic sounds, and to sing and warble like a Canary, with equal facility.

Although properly classed with the Lories, the Purple-cap differs materially from the typical form of those birds: for instance, the filamentous character of the tongue is much less apparent in it than in other members of the same sub-family, in whom the tubular and papillary structure of that organ is developed to its utmost extent.

Consequently the bird under notice is more easily kept than the true Lories, and will, in fact, live for a number of years on a diet such as we have recommended for the Blue Mountain Parrot: we have even seen one of these birds that lived, in fair health, for a number of years on bread and milk sweetened with brown sugar, with occasionally a few grapes, or strawberries thrown in for a variety, when in season.

All the birds of this species that we have ever seen were exceedingly tame and gentle, and, moreover, excellent linguists and mimics, and evinced the greatest attachment towards their owners, whose caresses they received and returned with much apparent pleasure.

The price of the Purple-cap is always pretty high, a specimen being scarcely to be obtained under fifty shillings, while £20 have been paid for a highly educated individual, that was looked upon by its purchaser as dirt cheap at the money.

Personally, as a bird to keep in one's study, and make a pet of, we prefer the Purple-cap to any other with which we are acquainted, not even excepting our ancient friend of the crimson tail, for it never shrieks, and evinces altogether so amiable and charming a disposition, that it is impossible for anyone to know it without loving it; and this high character it has maintained unimpaired for many years, since Bechstein, nearly one hundred years since, wrote concerning it:—"It appeared to be the mildest, most endearing and amiable; in short, the most docile and talkative of all Parrots. It cries 'lory', and chatters incessantly, but in a hollow voice, something like that of a man who speaks from his chest; it repeats everything whistled to it in a clear tone; it likes to be always caressed and paid attention to; its memory is very good."

Jardine again in *The Naturalist's Library*, speaks of it in equally eulogistic terms: "Held in great estimation, not only on account of its

elegant plumage, but for the docility it evinces, and its distinct utterance of words and sentences, it is also lively and active in its disposition, and fond of being caressed."

"As a ventriloquist", writes Mr. Gedney, "the Purple-cap possesses no equal, and the manner in which he will imitate domestic sounds, throwing his voice to the opposite side of the room, is perfectly startling to a stranger.....They require to share the constant society of their owner, and find intense delight in being frequently petted and caressed, repeating all the endearing expressions of their favourite attendant with a readiness and fluency which is quite astonishing."

We might multiply quotations to almost any extent, all couched in similar strains, but *cui bono*? enough has been said to demonstrate the necessity under which every one who calls himself a fancier of foreign birds remains to become, at the earliest possible opportunity, the possessor of one, or, better still, of a pair of these most delightful birds.

We have said that they are to be treated exactly as recommended for the Blue Mountain, but they are hardy enough to live on a much more meagre diet; indeed some authorities consider that bread and milk sop is sufficient to preserve them in health: but we do not; so treated they are very apt to suffer from diarrhæa, and, as in some instances that have come under our cognizance, to ultimately die from consumption, which is surely a consummation to be avoided, and which certainly can be prevented by proper care and attention.

In one respect the Purple-cap differs from the Blue Mountain in the matter of diet, it does not seem at all to care about insect food, but is particularly fond of fruit, particularly ripe grapes, which it sucks with much apparent pleasure.

As we have already written a good deal about this bird elsewhere, we are unwilling to repeat what we have said, and draw our account to a conclusion, merely remarking that although the orange beak of the Purple-cap appears to be a formidable weapon of offence no less than defence, on account of its size and the sharp point with which it is terminated, it is really most harmless, its most terrible bite amounting to a mere nibble and nothing more; so that we are of opinion that any aviarist desirous of getting it to breed in his aviary must provide it with ready-made burrows in which to nest, as it is quite incapable, from the weakness of the buccal muscles to excavate a hollow for itself in any log, no matter how decayed and soft. But all the Indian Lories are weak billed, and must on no account be placed in the same enclosure with any of their African or Australian congeners, who are sharp and strong of beak, and, many of them, of cruel and vindictive disposition.

We say "many of them" advisedly, for there are, of course, exceptions to every rule, and we have known individuals, belonging to the most savagely disposed races, as tame and gentle as the most amiable of Purple-caps; and conversely, no doubt, an odd member of the latter species, as well as of others remarkable for good temper, may now and then be met with of a sour and morose nature, and as unlike the majority of their brethern as it is possible for them to be. Nor is this such a wonderful thing when one considers it a little, men have a national and an individual character, and disposition; thus we English are stolid and uncommunicative, with an eye to the main chance; while our neighbours across the Channel are gay, lively, impulsive, not to say gushing; yet we occasionally meet with a Britisher, to use an American phrase, who ought to have been born in France, and a Frenchman, now and then, as phlegmatic and matter-of-fact as any true-born Briton.

It is just the same with birds: each individual has his private disposition as well as his national, or tribal characteristics, and every now and then one meets with exceptions to the general rule, and to argue from these individuals that all the race to which they belonged necessarily resembled them in every point, is as manifestly absurd, as it would be for a Chinese to maintain that the English were the liveliest people in the world, because he chanced to fall in with a young Briton full of life and spirits, brimming over with fun and jollity, a "jolly dog" in fact, of which a few specimens yet linger in our midst, and crop up unexpectedly now and then.

Therefore to say that all the Cockatoos are noisy and spiteful, or that all the Lories are amiable and well-behaved, because an individual, or a few individuals with such dispositions have come under the speaker's or writer's notice, would be every whit as unreasonable, and incorrect, as to maintain that all Englishmen are lively, or all Frenchmen sad, because they have met one or two persons of the former nation endowed with a jovial, and two or three of the latter afflicted with a morose and taciturn disposition.

It is true a general or national characteristic, or series rather of characteristics, runs through each race, but beneath, or rather independent of, these peculiarities one meets with individuals possessed of very different qualities in every country, and belonging to every race; so that it behoves the student of character, whether in man or birds, to beware of drawing general conclusions from a few observations, but to reserve a final judgment until he has had sufficient data, drawn from numerous observations, upon which to found his arguments so securely that no future traveller over the same ground will be

able to break down his work, and scatter his conclusions to the winds.

All birds, and the Purple-cap is one of these, that feed more on soft than on hard food, require daily attention to keep their cages or other dwelling-places sweet and clean. Thus a large bird-room inhabited by, say one hundred, seed-eating birds, may, quite safely, be left for twelve months without being cleaned out, and no ill effects either to the birds, or to the human inhabitants of the house need be apprehended; but if even half a dozen soft-billed birds are included with them in the apartment, the case will be very different, and great care must be exercised, or very objectionable results will speedily follow: such a room, containing even the limited number of six soft-billed, or soft-food-eating birds will require to be thoroughly cleaned out and everything in it renewed at least four times a year, so that on the whole it is much better not to keep hard and soft-billed birds together in the same aviary.

Similarly the cage of a seed-eating bird may be cleaned out once a week only, but that of a soft-food-eating bird, such as a Purple-capped Lory, must be attended to every day, or the health of the bird will suffer, and the room in which the cage is placed be rendered almost uninhabitable by reason of the effluvium arising therefrom.

Although the Purple-cap does not, as a natural consequence of the diet upon which it subsists, eat, or rather swallow, as much grit and sand as a seed-eating bird, it cannot be preserved in health without some small gravel for use in its gizzard, as the muscular stomach of birds is popularly termed; therefore the owner will do well to place a plentiful supply of coarse river, or well-washed sea, sand at the bottom of his pet Lory's cage, which he must make up his mind to clean, or have cleaned, out every day, not even excepting Sunday, and this, being a work of necessity, need cause no scruple to the most conscientious of bird-keepers, or aviarists, to use the latest word coined to express a fancier of feathered pets.

As a further incentive to exertion in this respect, a clean cage means a clean, healthy, comfortable, happy-looking bird, while a dirty cage necessitates a miserable, bedraggled, moping creature, that spends half its time with its head under its wing, endeavouring by such means to shut out the evil odours arising from the floor of its domicile, from its sensitive olfactory nerves.

Again, a dirty cage is always more or less infested with vermin, and a bird tormented by these wretched parasites soon becomes diseased, often plucks itself bare of feathers in its desperate attempts to free itself from its tiny myriad tormentors, and, from continual disturbed

rest, grows mopy and dozy in the day-time, and if not yet really ill, has every appearance of being so.

The Purple-capped Lory is too valuable and too charming a bird to be neglected thus; but many fanciers are afraid of a little trouble, and rather than leave their birds half an hour in the morning earlier than usual, pretend that they have not time, when really all that they want is inclination, and thus the poor birds, who cannot help themselves, are made to suffer.

Any one who has watched and studied a handsome healthy Purple-cap cannot have failed to have noticed what a consummate dandy, not to say fop he is, and what care and attention he bestows upon his toilet; every individual feather is carefully passed through his beak many times a day; he delights in bathing, and if, by chance, a speck of dirt happens to fall on his beautiful coat, the poor fellow's distress is almost ludicrous to behold: he crains his head back so as almost to touch the offending portion of "matter out of place" with his orange beak, and then suddenly draws back, shaking his head with every expression of disgust, then he shivers all over, rather than shakes himself, and if the speck falls off he squeals with pleasure, but should it still adhere to his back, he jumps about the cage with every symptom of deep concern, and, finally, on finding that nothing else will do, knocks it off with the point of his bill, which he immediately cleans against his perch, and then, generally, goes and has a bath. Think then what one of these birds kept in a dirty cage must suffer.

Of the Purple-cap the Hon. and Rev. F. G. Dutton writes, "I fed these birds in the same manner as the Blue Mountains, and had that best of all proofs that my food suited them, their plumage improved so much. I bought them of M. Celle de Sprimont in Belgium, whose gardener declared they were aviary-bred, and that they supplied the old birds with some chopped meat when they were nesting."

We think it is quite possible that this may have been the case, though our correspondent goes on to say that he knows nothing of the truth of what he was told.

We believe that all the Lories are partially insectivorous, and failing insects might eat a little meat, as many other birds are in the habit of doing; that they bred as stated we also believe to be not only possible but probable.

*The Hon. and Rev. F. G. Dutton's account of the
Purple-capped Lory (Lorius domicella).*

THE Purple-capped Lory is, I think, overrated in all the accounts I have seen. Bechstein's account made me most anxious to have one, but although I wished and wished for years, I never had the opportunity till the spring of 1882. In January of that year, I saw some advertised by M. Celle de Sprimont, and bought a pair which reached me in February.

I had long learnt from observation of those at the Zoological Gardens to take Bechstein's remarks *cum grano*, but I was not prepared to find the Purple-cap as untameable as mine were. They were bold birds, but nothing would induce them to take anything from my hand. This is not to be taken as implying that the Lories are not most caressing and attractive in their ways, but it shows that to become so they must be brought up by hand. My pair were, I was told, bred in the aviary in Belgium, so, no doubt, they had no special taming. Again with regard to their talking powers, there is no doubt that some specimens are excellent talkers, but the majority do not talk at all. I have seen many, and never seen a talking one yet, and I am confirmed in my view that *generally* they do not talk by one of our largest bird-dealers. I found my pair very noisy, but not unendurably so. One could not very well talk to any one else when they were in the room, but when I was alone, I did not mind their cries. They smelt as much as a Hawk would have smelt, and often I had to have their cage cleaned twice a day. They were bright and active, and very fond of bathing.

I agree with Dr. Greene and disagree with Bechstein as to their hardness. They are *chilly* birds, very sensitive to cold, but not delicate. Their chilliness, I think, comes from the extreme thinness of their plumage. They appear to have very little down compared to the other Parrots. They would never eat seed. I was told they had been fed on rice, but they never would touch it. So I gave them what I find all brush-tongued Parrots like,—bun and fig soaked in boiling water, and then mashed into a pulp. Later on in the day they had sponge-cake soaked in water.

As the weather became warmer, I turned them loose. They showed to great advantage in the garden. Their movements are a quick, hopping step like that of the Barbets. They never liked being separated for long, and if one flew to a distance from the other, they were sure

to be found together again very soon. They had a strong homing faculty. They might sometimes fly nearly half a mile away, to a covert out of sight of home, but always about five they would be found on the cornice of the house, where they roosted, if they did not feel sufficiently hungry to come to their cage. It was very pretty to see them fly home. They were like living jewels as their bright scarlet bodies flashed through the air. They did not always come home together: sometimes one would be back twenty minutes earlier than the other, but at five the cornice of the house was pretty sure to hold them.

If they could have gone on like this, I should probably have them now; but winter was coming, and they would not have been able to stand autumn, still less winter, days out. I felt I could not have them in a sitting-room through winter, when windows must necessarily be more closed, and their smell would render the room unbearable, so in September I parted with them to the Zoological Gardens, where I believe they still are, in this November, 1883.

If any one should think of buying a Purple-cap or a Ceram Lory, for I imagine the remarks about one apply equally to the other, I would advise him to secure a thoroughly tame bird, and one that can already say one or two words at least. For this he must be prepared to give rather more than he would for an ordinary Lory, which is worth about fifty shillings.



ALEXANDRINE PARAKEET

ALEXANDRINE PARRAKEET.

Psittacus eupatrius, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Palæornis Alexandri*, VGRS., JRD.; *Psittacus Alexandri*, BOHST., LTHM.; *Psittacus neglectus*, *Psittacus torquatus*, *Conurus Alexandri auctorum*; etc., etc. GERMAN: *Der grosse Alexander-Sittich*.

FRENCH: *La grande Perruche à Collier*, VLLT.

A CONSIDERABLE amount of confusion exists with regard to the different species of *Palæornes*, in consequence of various authors having imposed upon several of them the specific designations of *Alexander* and *torquatus*; so that it becomes a matter of some consequence to clearly individualise each species, in order to obviate for the future the possibility of one of them being mistaken for the other.

Speaking of the genus, *Palæornis*, Mr. Vigors observes: "The birds that compose it are at first sight distinguished by their superior elegance and gracefulness of form. This character is considerably increased by the construction of the tail, the two middle feathers of which far exceed the rest in length."

The bird which forms the subject of the present notice, is a native of India, and is also found in the adjacent islands, whence it is not unfrequently imported into this country, although not as often as its smaller congener, the Ring-necked, *Psittacus*, or *Palæornis torquatus*, also called the Bengal Parrakeet, of which we propose giving a description in the next chapter.

The Alexandrine Parrot, if named after the great Emperor of Macedonia, deserves the appellation, for he is, literally, the greatest of his race, measuring some twenty inches in extreme length, twelve of which, however, are occupied by the tail; the body is slim and compactly made, but the head is large, and the beak of formidable dimensions; still his majesty can scarcely be called a handsome bird, nor is he of

exactly royal, not to say imperial aspect; but he is not a bad fellow nevertheless, and, if taken young, can be made a very agreeable companion.

The prevailing colour of the plumage is grass green, the back of the neck is marked by a broad crescentic patch of pinky-rose; and a narrow ring of black, starting from the insertion of the mandibles, on both sides, passes round the neck, forming a complete circle; the beak is orange-red, and there is a large dull-red spot on the shoulder on either side.

The female may be recognised by the absence of the black necklet, and is rather smaller than her mate, with a somewhat shorter tail.

These birds breed in hollow trees, where the female lays three or four white eggs: when the young are brought up by hand, they become very tame and docile, and learn to speak fairly well; they are hardy too, for one of them has survived in the Parrot House of the London Zoological Gardens since 1873.

It is somewhat doubtful whether this or the smaller Ring-necked species is the bird that was known to the ancients, the Parrot of which Aristotle and Pliny wrote, and in honour of whom Horace composed one of his most charming poems.

In captivity, this Parrot is to be fed and treated as already recommended for the species noticed in the foregoing pages, not Lories; namely, on seeds of different kinds, canary, hemp, oats, maize or barley, and vegetables of sorts, such as carrot, potato, etc., whether raw or cooked; but on no account should it be given either milk, sop, meat or bones, and it should always have access to water, no less for drinking than for bathing purposes.

To us it is a mystery how, or where, the notion that Parrots do not drink can have arisen in this country; and it will be no fault of ours if it be not shortly relegated to the limbo of defunct superstitions, in company with many another time-honoured, but pernicious, "vulgar error." We positively lose all patience when we think of it, and are compelled to pull up short, or we should go on descanting upon the enormity and cruelty of the practice, until our readers grew weary and closed the book in despair, not to say disgust, a consummation that we hasten to avoid by passing on to the consideration of other matters connected with our subject.

Referring to the power possessed by these birds of contracting and expanding at will the iris, a correspondent writes: "She (the Parrot) has a peculiar way of contracting her eye when preparing to do, or actually doing, anything mischievous: when so contracted, the pupil of the eye appears as it were a mere speck of jet. I believe that her

fondness for, and her sympathetic attachment to, me was something more than mere instinct, for if I think strangely of her at any time, even in the middle of the night, she is sure to answer me with her own little note, her eyes remaining shut, and her head tucked in her shoulder, as though she were fast asleep."

That is "thought reading" to some purpose, and, as the writer of the above note truly says, shows "something more than mere instinct": it would really seem now and then as if an erring sylph, or sprite, had been condemned to pass a certain period of its existence under the form of one of these cunning-looking birds, so remarkable is their intelligence, though not always, it must be confessed, made use of to the best advantage; for occasionally the indwelling sprite seems rather to be a gnome, or a black dwarf endowed with malicious propensities, than a beneficent fairy, such as we read of in the "good old times" when we wore pinafores, and had no cares but lessons.

The great fault of all these birds is their extreme noisiness, and with every care, and much patience, we have not been able to succeed in breaking one of them of the habit, though we have succeeded in preventing their acquiring it, and others have been more fortunate than we; the Rev. J. G. Wood, for instance, who, writing about one of these birds, says:

"This species of Parrot is not very good at talking, though it can learn to repeat a few words, and is very apt at communicating its own ideas by a language of gesture and information especially its own. It is, however, very docile, and will soon learn any lesson that may be imposed, even that most difficult task to a Parrot—remaining silent while any one is speaking. One of my pupils had one of these birds, of which he was exceedingly fond; and finding that although his body was in the schoolroom below, his mind was with his Polly in the room above, I allowed her to stay in the room on condition that the lesson should be properly learned. At first, however, Polly used to screech so continually that all lessons were stopped for the time, and I was fearful that Polly must be banished. However I soon overcame the difficulty, for every time that Polly screamed I used to put her into a dark cupboard, and not release her for some time. She soon found out my meaning, and it was very amusing to see her push out her head ready for a scream, and then check herself suddenly. She was a very nice Polly, and became a great favourite; her great treat was half a walnut, which she held tightly in one claw, while she delicately prized out the kernel with her hooked beak and horny tongue. The end of the poor bird was very tragic; she got out of a window, flew to a tree, and was there shot by a stupid farmer"—one of those bovine-brained

agriculturists that massacred the Parrots the late Mr. C. Buxton would otherwise have successfully acclimatised at Northrepps Hall.

Well, Mr. Wood, seemingly, was no prentice hand at tuition, which may, no doubt does, account for his success in mastering the Alexandrine favourite of his pupil: we have made the same attempt, with more than one Parrot, Parrakeet and Cockatoo, but always with the same result—ignominious discomfiture. We are in no wise disheartened, however, and mean to try again—and again if it should be necessary, but as we have said, the acquisition of the habit can certainly be prevented.

All these birds are extremely fond of company, and cannot bear to be left alone for an instant; hence they are more suitable for out-door aviaries, or a conservatory where, swinging on a perch, or hung up against a background of elms or lime-trees, or of palms and tree ferns, as the case may be, they add materially to the attractiveness of the scene, and their screaming is not as noticeable as when they are kept in a room.

They are very sensitive too, and take likings and dislikings at first sight; nor can any subsequent conduct of the individual concerned induce them to modify their first impressions.

Some of them become friendly at once with all their lady visitors, and object most vehemently to men and boys; while others again are women-haters, and will allow a man to do anything with them: scratch their head, take them out of their cage, feed them from between his lips, and so on; and when they have once formed an attachment, no matter how ill-placed it may be, nothing will induce them to transfer it elsewhere, they are nothing if not constant; their motto, "*Foi est tout.*"

Volumes might be, and actually have been, filled with anecdotes of this favourite bird and its congeners, but we shall content ourselves with one related by Mr. Gedney, in his entertaining and instructive little work on *Parrots and Parrakeets*.—"It was my miserable fate," writes that gentleman, "to be left in ill-health at Singapore, suffering, in fact, from that species of 'lead-poisoning' which was very common during the Indian mutiny, and although it was, perhaps, unreasonable of me not to 'slip my cable' when such a result was expected, still I had a young Joque monkey and a Ring-necked Parrakeet, and their presence did more towards my recovery than all the physic, lint and lotion of old Bolus. Poor Jacko had a knotted rope suspended from the rafter; with a few cross pieces of wood put through the strands, making perches, upon which he dozed and plotted schemes of revenge against Polly, or, it may be, meditated upon the chances of stealing

her banana out of the sand-tray at the bottom of his rope-ladder, without being detected in the act.

"The great fun was to watch her and Jacko in their contests for the upper perch. Polly having taken her 'tiffin', was disposed for an afternoon nap, and she accordingly commenced to mount the rope-ladder, but Jacko immediately set up a chatter, savagely showing his teeth meanwhile, and shaking the rope violently to impede the movements of Poll. In spite of this, up she goes steadily, hand over hand, nearer and nearer to the coveted perch, on which sits the monkey in a boiling passion, and trembling with excitement. Holding on by his tail and hind legs, he now attempts to get hold of Poll, but she snaps at his hands right and left, with a rapidity that is perfectly astounding, and presently a shriek of pain announces that her beak has drawn blood, and down drops poor Jacko like a stone, whilst Poll takes quiet possession of the perch, where, after repeating a few self-congratulatory notes, she dozes off as if nothing had happened. Jacko meanwhile sits upon his haunches, examining his bite with a very rueful countenance; but a little petting from me sets him right, and a thorough examination of everything eatable and drinkable having been made, he goes regularly to work to 'blow the steam off.'

"Making the rope-ladder his centre, he performs a series of splendid jumps to it from all the articles of furniture in the room—much to the disgust of Polly—and then, after a headlong rush round the apartment, he bounds up the ladder like a flash of lightning, and makes a grab at Polly's tail, dropping at once to the ground, to escape the consequences of this daring act. The bird, however, was never injured by him in this way, for she watched his every movement, the only time that he ever stole a march upon her was once when she happened to be feeding in the sand-tray, immediately beneath the rope-ladder, down which her stealthy enemy slipped like a serpent, and making a snatch caught her by the base of her tail.

"At that moment a well directed bunch of bananas from me hit him in the chest, and down he came, whereupon Poll seized him by the fleshy part of the lower arm and bit it through.

"This was a lesson which he never forgot, and although his devilment compelled him to annoy Poll, as a source of fun, still he grew to respect, if he did not love her."

A couple of companions like the above were certainly enough to make a young fellow well, in spite of doctors and 'lead-poisoning', and we feel glad on reading it that the narrator was spared to tell the tale.

There is no doubt the subject of the present notice is quite as

susceptible of being tamed as any of its congeners, although we have recently seen it stated that such is not the case: several specimens that, at various times, have come under our own observation were as gentle and amiable as they could well be, and apparently much attached to their owners. They vary, however, immensely in disposition, but all of them are extremely impatient of solitude, and, where practicable, should be kept in pairs; not necessarily with a view to breeding them, but in order, by providing them with congenial society, that they may not acquire the objectionable habit of shrieking, so common to all the race, when kept in solitary confinement.

*The Hon. and Rev. F. G. Dutton's account of the Alexandrine
Parrakeet (Palæornis eupatrius).*

THIS bird has even greater disadvantages as a pet than the Bengal Parrakeet, inasmuch as its screams are even more disagreeable, and its bill is much more formidable, being nearly as large as a Macaw's. But it can be made as tame, and taught to talk as well as the Bengal Parrakeet. One of these, by the way, made an instance of the third species of *Palæornis* which I have let out, and which has not returned to its cage. The other species were the Bengal and the Blossom-head.



RING-NECKED OR BENGAL PARRAKEET.

RING-NECKED .

OR BENGAL PARRAKEET.

Psittacus torquatus, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Psittacus Alexandri*; *Psittacus torquatus macrourus antiquorum*;

Psittacus minor macrovius viridis; *Psittacus manillensis*? BCHST.;

Psittacus docilis; *Palæornis torquatus*, VGRS.; etc. GERMAN: *Der Kleine Alexandersittich*.

THIS pretty little bird is, like the preceding species, a native of India, but is also found in Africa; the difference between the Asiatic and African varieties being too slight to warrant their being separated into two distinct species.

The Ring-necked Parrakeet bears a general resemblance to its larger relative the Alexandrine, but the green head has a decided bluish tinge running through it; the beak is red, with a black tip, the wing spot is much smaller, and the pinky rose crescent on the back of the neck in the latter bird, dwindles down to a narrow line in the one under consideration.

There is no difference between the African and Indian Ring-necked Parrakeets, except that the former is perhaps a trifle the larger of the two, and has a black instead of a reddish beak.

In the London Zoological Society's catalogue, the African bird is called the Rose-ringed Parrakeet (*Palæornis docilis*), and the Indian, the Ring-necked Parrakeet (*Palæornis torquatus*); but, as we have already remarked, the differences are so very trifling as to be really immaterial; and to make two species of them, is, in our opinion, creating a difference for the sake of multiplying species, where too many have been already made.

A smaller variety still is found in the Island of Mauritius, and differs

from its continental relative in size only; so that it seems to us unnecessary to separate it into a distinct species, as many writers, including Dr. Russ, have done. The latter writer names it *Der Kleinste Alexander sittich* (*Psittacus eques*); it received the name of *Palæornis bitorquatus* from Kuhl and Vigors, an appellation to which Prince L. Bonaparte added the further specific epithet *borbonica*. It is seldom to be met with in Europe, as it scarcely ever falls into the hands of the dealers, the few individuals that are about having been brought over by returning colonists: it is generally confounded with the bird just described, from which, as we have said, it only differs in being a trifle smaller; but it is quite as hardy, and susceptible of education.

The Ring-necked Parrot, whether African or Indian, makes a nice pet, very tame and gentle with its friends, but given to scream horribly at sight of a stranger. It is not, usually, a great talker, though there are many exceptions to this rule: one that we have frequently seen being credited with the knowledge of over one hundred different sentences.

The female is known by the absence of the rose and black rings.

The treatment should be the same, in every respect, that has been recommended for the Alexandrine Parrakeet.

When first imported these birds are decidedly delicate, many dying before they become acclimatised; but once they have got over the effects of the voyage, and have become used to their new surroundings, they grow quite strong and hardy, even to the extent of wintering out of doors with impunity in this bleak climate of ours.

We are not aware that the Ring-necked Parrot has ever been bred in England, although it is not unusual for solitary females to deposit eggs in their cages: but we do not think any very persistent attempts have been made to perpetuate the species in confinement here.

In India, however, it is not unfrequently bred in aviaries, and from among these domesticated birds has sprung a canary-coloured "sport", that is really a very remarkable bird: though of a rich citron yellow all over the whole body, except the beak which is red, and the legs and feet which are lead-coloured, the Yellow Ring-necked is an albino, for it has a pink eye; it is not very common, and is rarely imported into this country, for it is a great favourite with the wealthy natives, and when one makes its appearance upon the scene it is at once secured for their aviaries, being held in almost as much veneration as the White Elephant in the neighbouring country of Siam.

The total length of this bird is fifteen or sixteen inches, of which the tail measures nearly ten, the two central feathers being three or four inches longer than the rest.

The Ring-necked Parrakeet, as we have said, learns to speak well,

but it takes a great deal of teaching; so much so that many people tire of the task before it is well begun, and dismiss the poor bird as stupid, when they themselves are simply lazy—"too much trouble", etc.

In order that one of these birds shall become a talker, it is necessary to take it in hand when very young, and, as assiduously as possible, repeat to it the word or words it is desired to teach it: constant repetitions impress the sound upon the Parrakeet's memory, and after a while the patient tutor will be rewarded for his pains, by hearing his little pupil repeating to itself in a low, and barely audible key, the syllables that have been so often spoken in its hearing, or rather directly to it; by and bye, it gains more confidence, and pronounces the words more loudly and more distinctly; but, only when it has thoroughly mastered its lesson, should a second be attempted, and when that has been accomplished, a third, and so on.

Well taught, the Ring-necked becomes a good talker; but left to itself, like many an idle boy and girl, it learns nothing, and is content to pass through life without any accomplishments whatever.

It seems almost a libel on the sex, but the females of this species of Parrakeet are almost incapable of learning to speak; on the other hand, they have any amount of capacity for screaming and shrieking at the very top of their by no means dulcet voices.

The Ring-necked Parrakeet is a long lived bird, enduring for fifteen or twenty years in the house, and instances are on record where a much more advanced age has been obtained.

"This most delightful of all these long tails", writes Dr. Russ, concerning the subject of the present notice, "is also that which was first known in Europe; it is mentioned by Aristotle, and described by Pliny. Many specimens of these Parrots were brought to Rome from Africa under Nero: it is also the only member of the family that is common to Asia and Africa: its habitat extends from Senegambia to Malacca; and in the East Indies it is the commonest of birds.

"It nests from January to March in the hollow boughs of trees, or in crevices in houses and old Pagodas, where it lays from three to four eggs.

"The price of a pair is about twenty-four or thirty shillings, but a talking Ring-necked is worth ninety shillings and upwards. Herr Gudera in Leipzig has one that repeats a goodly catalogue of German and French expressions.

"An old pair in my bird-room lived in perfect amity with other Parrots, and small birds, until I made the acquisition of three young females, when they immediately attacked the other birds, and maliciously bit them. So it behoves one to be cautious.

"The first pair began to nest in April, and deposited three eggs in a nest-box, which, however, they did not incubate. They have, on the other hand, been successfully bred by Herr Otto Wiegand, as recorded in *The Feathered World* for 1873, No. 19."

The same author gives a very full description of this bird in his great work, *Die fremdländischen Stubenvögel*, accompanied by a portrait (xxv, Bird 120), as well as in his latest book, *Die sprechenden Papageien*, to which we must refer our readers, as the accounts given are too long for transcription into these pages, and of too interesting a nature to be condensed.

From what we have written it will be gathered that the Ring-necked Parrakeet, whether hailing from India, Africa, or the Mauritius, is, on the whole, a very desirable bird, and so it really is; but, at the same time, it must be carefully borne in mind that all these Parrakeets have tempers of their own, and shew them on occasion.

If they are not spoiled, however, by being teased, they are amiable enough, but once they have been angered into screaming, or shrieking rather, there is no enduring them in the house, let them be otherwise ever so accomplished and desirable, for their incessant cries are enough to give the horrors to the unfortunate person who is doomed to listen to them, so that care must be taken not to irritate them, and irretrievably ruin their tempers by foolish and tantalising tricks, as so many people, and not always children either, are in the habit of doing.

The Hon. and Rev. F. G. Dutton's account of the Ring-necked or Bengal Parrakeet (Palæornis torquatus).

THIS bird would be the ideal of pets, if any one could find the way of successfully breaking it of screaming. One of the most lovely of Parrakeets, its powers of talking are considerable, and its devotion to those to whom it takes a fancy is unbounded.

It is hardly possible to resist buying it, when one of the numerous specimens that have been well-taught is offered for sale. But the cheap prices at which they are often offered tell a tale in themselves. I have again and again kept them: charming French specimens that did their military exercises, their drum, their "*As-tu-déjeuné, Cocotte?*" their little song: English ones that had a perfect vocabulary of sentences, and one and all having that greatest merit of a talking bird, that they would say them when you wanted them; but one and all, they have had to go. They would not confine themselves to our speech, but would indulge in their own, and there are few noises so irritating to the ear as the incessant scream of the Bengal Parrakeet.

They are often capricious: sometimes they like or dislike a whole sex: sometimes they are guided solely by individual preferences. I had a most accomplished cock-bird once, but all his affection was reserved for ladies: a man could never trust him; he might be polite for a moment, but when he got his chance, he would give a most vicious bite. I know a hen at this moment who will let men handle her, but will bite any woman.

With regard to the sexes, as a rule the hens are impartially vicious, and they learn much less than the cocks, while they scream quite as much.

Some of the birds will learn fresh sentences after one buys them. One I bought in Paris, forgot nearly all its French after I parted with it, and became a good English talker, I was told. But, as a rule, birds which speak at command do not add to their knowledge. I shall have more to say on this subject under the head of the Double-fronted Amazon.

Bengal Parrakeets are very hardy—I do not recollect ever having had one ailing. But if I had, I should treat them with a regimen of great warmth. It is wonderful what heat all the tropical Parrots can bear, and what excellent results it has. They are very fond of washing, and should always have a good bath provided.

They are not good birds to turn loose out of doors. All the *Palæornis* tribe are very powerful on the wing, and seem to have but little homing instinct. They take considerable flights, and unless one happens to see which way they have gone, they are apt to lose themselves. I have no doubt that if they were fed, they could live at liberty all the year round in our climate. One, *Palæornis schisticeps*, is found in the snow limit of the hills.

What I have said about the Bengal Parrakeet may be taken as applying to the Senegal Parrakeet. This, though smaller than the Bengal, and slenderer, with a dark bill instead of a rosy one, has precisely the same merits and the same fault of noisiness. They are not so common in England as the Bengal, but in France they are much commoner. Pity that so small a bird should have so loud a scream. The Senegal has a smaller voice in speaking than the Bengal.

We cannot quite agree with our friend Mr. Dutton here: the Senegal Parrot is not the Ring-necked Parrakeet, whether African or Indian, but a perfectly distinct species, called by Dr. Russ Der Mohrenkopf-Papagei (*Psittacus Senegalus*): it is of much less frequent occurrence in this country than *Palæornis torquatus*, nor does it belong to the

Palæornis sub-family, but is the *Pionus Senegalus* of Wagler, the *Piocephalus Senegalensis* of Swainson, and the *Pionias Senegalus* of Finsch.

Dr. Russ considers the Mohrenkopf one of the most delightful of cage birds, yet he relates an anecdote of one that was in his possession for some time, that does not say much for the amiability of that individual bird at all events: but we shall return to this subject at greater length on a future occasion.

The bird which Mr. Dutton calls the "Senegal" is the African variety of the Ring-necked Parrakeet.



BLOSSOM-HEADED PARRAKEET.

BLOSSOM-HEADED PARRAKEET.

Psittacus cyanocephalus, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Palæornis rosa*, *Palæornis erythrocephalus bengalensis*, GLD.;

Palæornis ginginianus; *Palæornis rhodocephalus*, SHW.

Palæornis bengalensis, VGRS., etc. GERMAN: *Der Pflaumenkopfsittich*.

FRENCH: *Perruche à tête bleue*, BRSS.

OF all the old world Parrots this is, without exception, the most elegantly formed, the most beautiful, docile, and desirable: the Lories may be dressed in more gorgeous attire, and be as tame and gentle, and of disposition as affectionate and mild, but they are difficult to preserve in health, and have not as yet frequently reproduced their kind in captivity, whereas the Blossom- or Plum-head yields to none of them in estimable qualities, and has the farther advantage of being extremely hardy, albeit a native of "the gorgeous East", and of actually having proved itself as ready to breed in the aviary as any of the Grass Parrakeets of Australia: Dr. Russ and other amateurs having bred these birds to the third and even fourth generation in their aviaries.

The late Mr. Gould was of opinion that there are two distinct species of Blossom-headed Parrakeets, one of which, coming from Ceylon, India, and especially from the Himalayan Mountains in the latter country, he named *Palæornis rosa*; and the other, or Burmese Blossom-head, *Palæornis erythrocephalus*, he found extending from Burmah into China, which was a larger bird than the former, with paler colours and a dull red wing spot: but it seems a pity to multiply species in a case like this, where the slight differences that exist are more of climatic and local origin than really specific; we have accordingly declined to subscribe to Mr. Gould's decision, and consider the Blossom-heads, whether Indian or Burmese, to be one and the same species.

The Blossom-head is a pretty bright green bird, about the size of

the Lesser Ring-necked, but of even more slender and elegant build: the head, as the English name indicates, is of a delicate plum colour, that is to say red shaded with blue, fainter on the cheeks than on the occiput and nape. The black stripes extending from the mandibles are continued as a collar round the neck, the top of the wing is marked by a red spot, and the under wing coverts are verditer blue.

The adult females want the black colour, which, in their case, is replaced by a ring, or necklet of pale yellow, the head is rather lilac or blue-grey than plum colour, and the tips of the tail feathers are yellow.

In both sexes the upper mandible is yellow, but the lower a dusky horn colour.

The young have the top of the head dull green, rather of a darker shade than the back, contrasting with the latter, and indicating where the cap will be: both mandibles are wax-yellow, and they have no wing-spot.

The call is not unmelodious, and they have an agreeable kind of song; the food should be seeds of all kinds, rice boiled soft, but not pulpy, a little yolk of egg, fruit and mealworms being added if it be desired to attempt to breed them. Figs, too, they are very fond of. They are very hardy, and seldom ail anything, and with common care they will live for many years in the house, in full enjoyment of health, and in perfection of plumage.

Their habits are lively, and they show to much better advantage in a large aviary than in a cage, but will not become as familiar in comparative liberty, as they do when kept in closer quarters: so that if it be desired to tame one of them, a young male had better be selected, and he will be found to be everything that a pet bird should be.

Of all the *Palæornes* we much prefer the subject of the present notice, which is, in every sense of the word, a nice bird, and only requires to better known to be appreciated as he deserves.

This charming bird was described under the name of the Cardinal Parrot, *der Kardinal Sittich*, towards the close of the last century, by Bechstein, who enumerated three "varieties", which, properly speaking, were one and the same bird in different stages of development.

The same author gives "his Eminence" but an indifferent character for intelligence. "This Parrakeet", says the ancient one (*Der alte*), "so easily distinguished by its plumage, is lively, fearful, and its cry is frequent. It learns nothing of itself, and it is with great difficulty that it can be made to repeat a few words", which is surely a libel on an interesting and most desirable bird.

It is a pity the Blossom-headed Parrakeet should be so seldom imported, and consequently expensive; though now and then a large consignment arrives, such as was received, according to Dr. Russ, in the year 1876, when four hundred head were to be seen at the same time in the shop of Gætano Alpi of Triest, but were, strange to say, all females.

When first imported these beautiful birds are rather delicate, for their Indian captors fed them on rice in the husk, which is rarely to be obtained in this country, and the sudden change to our English seeds, together with the transition from a warm to a comparatively cold climate, too often prove fatal: once acclimatised, however, they are hardy enough, and, as we have said, breed very freely in the aviary.

Writing of this species, Mr. Gedney says: "I can bear personal testimony to their strong attachment to their owner, for I had a bird of this species given me recently, but he was inconsolable at the change, and made such a hideous noise that, after a week's trial, I sent him home again, much to his delight."

Mr. Wiener's opinion of the Blossom-headed Parrakeet is that he is "gentle but not particularly talented."

Dr. Russ's testimony to the attractive qualities of this bird is strong, and expressed in the following terms: "Unter allen diesen oder vielmehr unter allen Papageien überhaupt einer der schönsten, anmuthigsten und liebenswürdigsten", (Among all these, or rather among all the Parrots in general, this is one of the most beautiful, most charming, and most worthy of being loved,) an encomium of which we endorse every word.

No one who has only seen a *Palæornis* in a cage, where certainly it does not show to much advantage, can form any idea of the gracefulness and agility of the same bird on the wing; whether rising in a gradually expanding spiral towards the clouds, flitting among the boughs that are scarcely more vividly green than his beautifully tinted coat, or darting, swift as an arrow from a bow, straight before him into space. Even at comparative liberty in a good-sized aviary, he appears a different bird to the pensive captive chained to a stand or ring, or sitting "like patience on a monument" on the topmost perch in a bell-shaped cage, or like the man with the "muck-rake" in Bunyan's immortal allegory, groping with bedraggled tail at the bottom of his enforced domicile.

"Never keep a Parrot in a cage", was the advice given to us long ago, by an esteemed and ancient friend, who was a keen lover of nature and all animated things—"If you can help it" we replied, but our friend shook his head, "Never keep one at all, if you cannot keep it properly."

*The Hon. and Rev. F. G. Dutton's account of the Blossom-headed
Parrakeet (Palæornis erythrocephalus).*

THIS is a charming Parrakeet, if it has been properly tamed: lovely, affectionate, and not, I think, unbearably noisy. I can bear a certain amount of noise, if it is not startling, and though the Blossom-head must be banished from the room, or covered up, when you want to talk with any one, yet it does not surprise one with a sudden shriek, like the Javan Parrakeet, nor does its screaming reach the unbearable pitch to which the Bengal's attains.

The cock birds are often taught to say a few sentences and to whistle tunes. No doubt they are much rarer in India than the Bengal Parrakeet, or one would think the soldiers would rear them in preference to the Bengals.

I had a pair which always nested every year in a cage twenty-four inches by eighteen inches. The hen bird always ruled the establishment, and led the cock a very hen-pecked life, till the breeding season came on, when he asserted his superiority. She laid in April, and varied between five eggs and two. She laid every third night. Nothing would induce her to go into the square mahogany box which was made for a nest, so I had the bough of a willow sawn in half, scooped out, made to shut with hinges, and a hole made in the side. This was then hitched on to the cage, where she laid. I put in saw-dust, but she would have nothing to say to it, and threw out every morsel, laying her eggs on the bare wood. I kept them in the dining-room, and her extreme greediness prevented the first nest coming to anything. Every time any one came into the room, she left her nest to see what she could get to eat. The next year I had them in my own room with no better result. The third year I put them into an empty room, and she hatched one egg. But at that moment the servants took advantage of my absence to have the chimney swept, and she forsook her nest. After this I lost the cock, so my breeding experiments came to an end.

The cock bird was fond of washing, but the hen did not seem to care about it. She was much the least tame and the least attractive of the two.

If any one should have a preference for Parrakeets over Parrots, and should have the opportunity of buying a tame and well-taught Blossom-head, I can confidently recommend them to make the purchase.



CARRACAND'S PARAKEET.

BARRABAND'S PARRAKEET.

Psittacus Barrabandi, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Polytelis Barrabandi*, GLD., WGL.; *Palæornis Barrabandi*, VGRS., SLB.; *Palæornis rosaceus*, *Platysercus rosaceus*, GR.; *Barrabandius rosaceus*, BP. GERMAN: *Der Schiltsittich*.

PLACED by Selby, in Jardine's *Naturalist's Library*, at the head of the genus *Palæornis*, Barraband's Parrakeet, named after the French ornithological painter, has no claim whatever to be so classed, being much more nearly related to the *Platycerci*, although the tail with which it has been endowed by nature is considerably longer than that of most of the members of the Broad-tailed sub-family, which, with some other peculiarities, seems to connect it rather with that subdivision of the honey-eaters to which the Paradise and Many-coloured Parrakeets belong: so apparent, indeed, is the difference that Wagler constituted it a genus by itself, to which he gave the name of *Polytelis*.

It is a tolerably large bird, measuring about fifteen inches in length, eight of which belong to the tail. The general colour of the plumage is a rich deep shade of green; the forehead, lower part of the face, and the throat are citron yellow, a broad band of deep scarlet red encircles the lower part of the neck, extending down to the breast, and the flight feathers of the wings are blue; the eye is red, and the lores, or spaces between the eyes and the ear coverts, are bright green; the beak is red, and the legs, which are much longer than those of any of the true *Palæornes*, are black.

The female is quite green without the yellow ring, or red shield.

To the inhabitants of New South Wales, of which colony they are natives, these birds are known by the name of "Green Leek", and concerning them, a recent writer observes, "As cage pets they are very much attached to their owners and to each other, and become both demonstrative and noisy in exhibiting affection", although in the

next paragraph but one, on the same page, he also says, "Green Leeks do not show any strong affection one for the other", which is surely somewhat inconsistent.

The same author concludes his chapter on Barraband's Parrot with the following recommendation:—"The treatment of the Green Leek should be the same as that of the Ring-necked."

Mr. Wiener, on the other hand, with more exactness, remarks, "This Parrakeet is said to live on the bloom of the wattle shrub during part of the year, but he does not appear to be quite as delicate as the Paradise or Many-coloured, although I have gathered costly experience by seeing Barrabands fall in fits from their perches for very trivial causes."

Dr. Russ, whose intimate knowledge of the subject is second to none, advises the Barraband to be fed on hemp-seed, fresh ants' eggs, mealworms, and egg food; while Mr. Wiener fed his on canary-seed, millet in the ear, and groundsel: be that as it may, we believe that insect food of some kind is indispensable, and prefer fresh ants' eggs, when obtainable, to any other; failing these, however, we give a preference to mealworms, about a dozen daily for each bird, and a piece of sponge cake a day old: on this diet a Barraband will live for some years, varying the bill of fare now and then with boiled rice, sweetened with Jamaica or Mauritius sugar, bruised figs, or even currants soaked; and any kind of flowers, such as cabbage blooms, mignonette, pea and bean blossoms, and so on; but if attempted to be kept on the food suitable for a Ring-necked Parrakeet, the chances are the poor birds would very soon have fits, which means either death, or, which is almost worse, paralysis.

Although difficult to keep on the score of food, the Barraband is not very susceptible to climatic influences, but, on the contrary, is able to stand a very low temperature with perfect impunity.

So far none of these birds have been bred in captivity, either here or on the continent, nor are we even aware of any cases of egg production among them.

On the whole, we can scarcely recommend the tyro in Parrot keeping to invest his money in Barrabands, which are by no means common, and, when imported, usually fetch from £3 to £4 each in the market. That they are handsome and elegant birds, the male especially, no one will attempt to deny, but enough has been said to show that they are even more difficult to preserve than the Purple-cap or Blue Mountain Lory.

"A constant supply of green food and a great variety of seeds" are suggested by Mr. Wiener as a preventive of fits, to which an un-

suitable regimen predisposes them; to which recommendation we may add insect food, and honey, or figs, crushed into a pulp, and slightly moistened, of which these birds appear to be passionately fond.

They are not cleanly in their habits, and require a large well-sanded cage, but thrive better in an out-door aviary, where they should not be trusted with other birds smaller and weaker than themselves; for, although some individuals of the species are mild and peaceable, others, and we might say most of them, are treacherous and spiteful, sidling up to an unsuspecting bird that is quietly enjoying a siesta, and nipping it by the leg, which is generally broken, but occasionally cut clean off.

They are common enough in the interior of New South Wales, and are not unfrequently caged in that country by the colonists, although they make poor talkers, but the difficulty of preserving them through the voyage, renders them always scarce in this country.

Selby and Jardine's account of this bird, written many years ago, is so interesting, and, in parts, so really amusing, that we are tempted to quote a portion of it here.—“In this handsome bird we have one of those interesting forms which so beautifully connect groups, otherwise distant and far removed: for though the character and shape of the tail, the well-defined ring or neck-collar, the proportions of the wings, etc., evidently place it in this genus (*Palæornis*), its elevated tarsi and feet (*sic*) shew an approach to the Broad-tailed Division (*Platycercinæ*), which stands at the further extremity of the *Psittacean* family. It is also a native of New Holland, in which interesting country so many species of *Platycercus* have been discovered, the rest of the Ring Parakeets, being the greater part of them natives of Continental India, and its neighbouring islands.....It (the Barraband) was first figured by Mr. Swainson, in his elegant and valuable *Illustrations*, under the name of *Psittacus Barrabandi*, from a skin in the possession of Mr. Leadbeater.....Judging from the proportion of its legs and feet, we are led to suppose that it is more terrestrial in its habits than its congeners, or that, in addition to its scansorial or grasping powers, it possesses superior activity, and moves with greater facility upon the ground.”

Which is actually the case, and shows what correct deductions may be adduced, by an experienced observer, even when the conclusion arrived at is not the true one, from analogies that would, doubtless, have escaped the notice of persons less used to exercise their reasoning powers.

Our authors continue, “By Wagler this bird was removed from the genus *Palæornis*, and constitutes his genus *Polytelis*; but as the only

character upon which it is established consists in the slight elongation and slenderness of the tarsi and toes, we have retained it among the Ring Parrakeets, where it was first placed by Vigors, and of which group it may be considered a slightly aberrant form."

We are utterly opposed to an unnecessary multiplication of species, but in this case it seems desirable to class the bird under consideration by itself; it is not a *Palæornis*, nor a *Platycercus*, though it stands about midway between the two, and, if only it were a honey-eater, might be readily placed among the Lories, or rather the *Trichoglossean* group of that family, to which it bears a certain outward resemblance: it is said to partially live upon the blossoms of the gum trees in its native land, but until this statement is confirmed by actual observation in its haunts, it will be better to leave the question of its natural diet open, and feed it as recommended by Mr. Wiener and Dr. Russ, rather than "like the Ring-necked Parrakeet", as advised by another writer.

It is much to be deplored that so little unanimity of opinion as regards the habits, and even the names, of birds should obtain among authors; but as the different species get to be better known, which can only happen when a number of connoisseurs have possessed, and studied them intimately in their aviaries and bird-rooms, many points that are now obscure will be cleared up, slight differences be recognised, and fancied resemblances differentiated, and the study of Natural History rendered a pleasure instead of a serious task to the tyro, as it is at present.



RED-WINGED PARAKEET.

RED-WINGED PARAKEET.

Psittacus erythropterus, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Aprosmictus erythropterus*, GLD.; *Psittacus melanotis*, SHW.;

Platycercus erythropterus, VGRS.; *Ptistes erythropterus et coccineopterus*, GR. GERMAN: *Der rothflügelige Sittich*.

THIS delightful Parrot is not an uncommon inhabitant of the greater part of the Eastern Australian "bush", but more especially abounds in the northern parts of the great island continent; yet it is among the rarest importations from that land of Parrots, and, consequently, commands a high figure in the bird-market, from £3 to £5 and upwards being the price of a pair.

The greater portion of the plumage is rich grass-green; the back, shoulders, and wing coverts are velvety black; a broad red, or rather crimson, patch ornaments the centre of the wing, and the rump is blue: the eyes are reddish, and the beak orange red.

According to Gray, the female is almost entirely green, the red on her shoulder reduced to very small proportions, and the velvet black of the back and wing coverts entirely wanting. Mr. Wiener, on the other hand, states that "the plumage of the female is less bright, and the red on the wing less extensive", but says nothing about the absence of the velvet mantle. Mr. Gedney agrees with the former writer; "The hen", he writes, "is less brilliantly coloured, her body plumage being dull green, of a palish hue, merging to yellow on the abdomen, with a strip of red upon the wing, and a blue patch at the base of the tail. She lacks the rich velvet black which makes the back of her mate so strikingly handsome, and her plumage is altogether inferior to that of the male bird."

In Lear's excellent *Illustrations of the Psittacidae*, the female is represented, coloured, as described by Mr. Gedney, and the young male is distinguished from his mother by the extent of the red bands on

his wings, and from his father by the absence of the black back; the young female is not depicted, but is said to resemble her mother.

There is no record of this species having been bred in confinement, although an aviarist in Germany had a solitary female that laid eggs: which would tend to prove that the achievement is not impossible.

The food of this species is the same that we have already recommended for the Cockatiel, and in addition a bough of lime tree, or poplar, or elm, covered with buds, may be given it to peck at, an inexpensive indulgence that will be much appreciated by the Red-wing, as well as some stale sponge-cake, and a few mealworms, now and then.

Mr. Wiener's experience with these birds is, on the whole, favourable. "The Red-winged or Crimson-winged Parrakeet", he writes, "is a timid, rare, and very beautiful bird, well adapted for cage life. Though the Crimson-wing may not learn to talk, neither will he scream; and his gentle manners, together with his brilliant plumage, will recommend him as a pet."

This author, nevertheless, proceeds to relate that two of these birds could fight so bitterly, when placed together in the same cage, that their speedy separation became imperative, in order to prevent the destruction of one, if not of both the combatants, and that although they were a genuine pair, which a subsequent owner succeeded, by a simple expedient, in reconciling so effectually that the birds mated.

"A few drops of aniseed oil", relates Mr. Wiener, "were spread on the plumage of the Blood-wing hen, and the effect was beyond all expectation, for instead of quarrelling and biting, the birds at once displayed great affection for each other, and there is every prospect of a brood resulting."

Whether this prospect was realised or not, we do not know: but we are inclined to adopt the negative view; for had the birds really reared a brood of young ones, we should doubtless have seen the success chronicled in some of the "Bird papers" with which we are acquainted, one or other of which is almost certain to get hold of a piece of important news, such as an account of the breeding of Red-wings in captivity would be.

Mr. Gedney, from whom we have already largely quoted, also speaks in the most favourable terms of these handsome birds: "I can", he writes, "specially recommend them as cage pets on account of their great beauty and quiet nature."

They can, nevertheless, as we have seen from Mr. Wiener's account of the specimens he possessed, fight bitterly at times, so that it is scarcely wise to draw general conclusions from one's experience with

a single pair, for doubtless the Red-wings, like all other birds and animals, vary in their several dispositions; one individual is meek and good-tempered, and another haughty and overbearing: there are exceptions to every rule, and the amateur who acquires a new bird, or a new pair of birds, would do well to watch them, and study their disposition, before turning them out among the established inmates of his aviary: and even when he thinks he has become thoroughly acquainted with them, he will do well to observe them carefully for some time, and watch their behaviour towards their fellow captives, when he has at last made up his mind to restore them to relative liberty in the aviary or bird-room.

This Parrakeet was classed by Swainson with the Lories, but erroneously so, for its food, in its native wilds, consists of seeds of all sorts, berries and insects belonging chiefly to the beetle kind (*Coleoptera*). Swainson asserted that it also partook of honey and pollen from the *Eucalypti*; but, if so, these are not indispensable to its well-being, as in the case of the Lories proper and the *Trichoglossi*, or Australian Lorikeets.

The food in confinement we have already mentioned, and upon it this bird will live in the house for a number of years, in the enjoyment of apparently perfect health, and certainly in the possession of unimpaired beauty.

The length of the Red-winged Parrakeet is about twelve inches, and the bird is stoutly proportioned: it is not very strong of beak, nor much given to whittling; consequently, if it be desired to induce it to breed, a suitable nesting place must be provided for its accommodation, in the shape of a naturally or artificially hollowed log of wood, hung up in some quiet corner of the aviary, for the Red-wing is a timid bird, which, although tolerably tame when confined within the bars of a cage, soon becomes wild again when restored to comparative liberty in a large aviary.

That it is tolerably hardy is abundantly evidenced by the fact that a fine male of this species has survived for several years, without water, in the Parrot House of the London Zoological Society, in the Regent's Park.

A friend of ours who spent some years in Northern Queensland, assured us that the Red-wing was the commonest kind of Parrakeet in that part of the country; he also said that it lived in great measure on the blossoms of the "wattle-trees", a kind of mimosa, and that often when he shot them the honey used to run out of their beaks in a stream, and that the aborigines, when they killed one, always put its head into their mouths and sucked the honey from the birds' crop.

As we had our doubts of the correctness of these assertions, we cross-examined our friend pretty severely as to the accuracy of his recollections, then referring to a period of some years back, and he confessed that perhaps it was the Blue Mountain Lory that the natives used to treat in the manner he described, and from which he had seen the nectarious juices of the wattle trees flowing in a stream; but he was positive as to the correctness of his reminiscences in regard to the frequent occurrence of this Parrakeet, and in proof thereof showed us a goodly number of wings which he had taken from the birds he had shot and preserved.

So we were satisfied, for we could not bring ourselves to believe the first account given by our friend of the Red-wing to be correct, it being quite at variance with all that we knew of the bird and its habits; for persons who are not naturalists are scarcely to be trusted, in a general way, with regard to the accuracy of their recollections of animals, especially when they are suddenly called upon after the lapse of a few years to relate their experience; and it is by neglecting the thorough sifting of such evidence, that so many mistakes have crept into works on Natural History; there is always some risk of taking information at second-hand, but occasionally there is none other to be had, in which case the statements made require testing in every possible way.

Dr. Russ is certainly in error when he says: "*Heimat ganz Australien*", (it extends over the whole of Australia,) for it is confined to the eastern, and especially the north-eastern, portions of that country.

We are with the doctor, however, entirely, when he says: "It is remarkable for its elegance and amiability, and is as enduring as most of the genus. It is a pity it so seldom reaches the dealers' shops."

Let us hope that as its various good qualities become better known to the philavian public, a demand will be created that will result in a more abundant supply of the Red-winged Parrakeet in the bird-market than has hitherto been the case. And as a female in the possession of Herr Professor Kamphausen has actually laid eggs in Düsseldorf, there seems no reason why the bird should not be bred, by and bye, in our aviaries.

Seeing that the Red-wing is a gentle and tractable bird, it should learn to speak, and acquire the use of articulate language, at least to as great extent as any of its relations, such as the Rosella, Cockatiel, and others of which we have read accounts, as well as seen and possessed examples: the fact being that with patience and perseverance any bird can be taught to imitate the human voice; even such unlikely subjects as the Canary bird, not to speak of the Bullfinch; for individuals of

both the latter species have spoken distinctly to our knowledge: the former used to say "Pretty Dick, pretty Dick, pretty little Dickee; kiss, kiss, kiss, pretty little Dickee": and the latter used to bow, spread out his tail, and repeat "Hip, hip, hurrah!" with the most remarkable correctness of intonation; he would also say, Peter (Pee-ter), his own name, quite distinctly, and we have no doubt would have learned many more words, had he not succumbed, prematurely, to an attack of that terribly fatal and insidious disease, bird-fever, or bird-typhus as some writers and dealers name the frightfully infectious malady that now and then sweeps off the whole of the inmates of an aviary, with cruel and implacable swiftness.

When this fell disease makes its appearance in a bird colony, the only chance of safety for any of its members consists in removing the yet healthy individuals to quite new, and, if possible, remote quarters, separately, where this can be done, and ruthlessly destroying the old cages, in which the infection will linger for many months, and possibly for years: and that the destruction, total and complete, of the old tainted residences is the only certain way of preventing a recurrence of the disaster, is borne out by facts in our possession, where aviarists who had "thoroughly disinfected", with carbolic-acid, sulphur, boiling water, and exposure to the air for many days, and even weeks, the cages in which an outbreak of "fever" had taken place, found that new birds, previously healthy, when placed in them, often after a long interval, contracted the malady, and died in a few days.

For this terrible complaint there seems to be no remedy, its symptoms are listlessness, loss of appetite, ruffling up of the feathers, great thirst, sometimes slight, rarely severe, diarrhæa, loss of strength, and death in two or three days, sometimes in about as many hours. As we have said, there is no cure, it must be at once stamped out, and it is far better to immediately destroy the affected individuals by means of a merciful drop of prussic acid, and remove the survivors to more healthy quarters, maintaining the strictest quarantine until all chance of danger is past.

As the complaint has a decided period of incubation, extending over a period of three or four days, it is always best when buying a new bird, to isolate it from its future companions for at least that space of time, when, if it still continues to appear "all right", it may be introduced to its new associates, without fear of its conveying to them the germs of a terrible disease: prevention is better than cure, even where the latter is at least a possibility; what then when there is absolutely none?

Red-wings being expensive birds, it will, of course, be policy to

secure them, as far as possible, from the risk of infection, and to make them as happy and comfortable as they can be made in captivity, in order to tempt them to reproduce their kind in the aviary; although natives of a warm country, they will stand the cold of our winters in an unheated room indoors, but we have not ventured to test their endurance out of doors, although we are disposed to believe that they would not, under such conditions, be more delicate than many of their compatriots.

With regard to the remark on page 2 of the first number of *Parrots in Captivity*, that "Like all the Parrot tribe, with one or two doubtful exceptions, the nesting place of Goffin's Cockatoos is in the hollow of some dead branch", our esteemed correspondent, Mme. Cassirer, of Paris, writes: "Why 'doubtful'? Are the accounts of the nest built of sticks of the Quaker Parrot (*Bolborhynchus monachus cinereicollis*), given by Azara, Darwin, Castlenau, and Burmeister, and in captivity in South America by Azara, by Schmidt in Europe, by Dr. Brehm, and Mülzel in the Zoological Gardens of Berlin—not sufficient to convince you? Do you not believe the accounts of the nests of the Peach-faced Love-birds (*Agapornis roseicollis*) given both by Drs. Brehm and Russ, and also of the Grey-headed Love-bird?" We are convinced: and cry '*Peccavimus.*'



TURQUOISINE.

TURQUOISINE.

Psittacus pulchellus, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Euphema pulchella*, SWNS.; *Nanodes pulchellus*, VGRS.;

Lathamus azureus, LSS.; *Psittacus Edwardsii*, etc., etc.

GERMAN: *Der Schönsittich*.

THE Turquoise is, without exception, one of the most charming members of the Parrot family, combining as it does in its small person the excellent qualities of comeliness, hardihood, docility, and amiability. In size it is about half as large again as the Budgerigar (*Melospittacus undulatus*); or to compare it with a species that has been already described in these pages, a third less than the Cockatiel.

The general colour of the plumage is dark green, the forehead and a circle round the eyes are sky-blue, the same colour extends to the chin, and is conspicuous on the shoulders, which are also marked higher up with a reddish brown patch; the under wings coverts are blue, and the under parts of the body bright yellow.

The female resembles her mate in general appearance, but has less of the blue on her face and wings, and in her the red shoulder spot assumes a reddish brown shade.

Speaking of the size of this bird, Dr. Russ remarks, "*Grösse der Feldlerche, doch schlanker und mit langem, zugespitztem Schwanz.*" (The size of the Field-Lark, but more slender, and with long, sharp-pointed tail.)

A seed-eater, grass-seed eater, the Turquoise offers no difficulty to the breeder in the matter of diet, canary and millet will keep him in perfect health and beauty for years: should it be desired, however, to get him to breed, he must be placed, with his wife, in a good-sized aviary, out of doors if possible, about the end of May, and be provided with suitable nesting-places in the shape of hollow logs, large cocoa-

nut husks, and small boxes, though we prefer the former, and when he has a young family to be provided for, oats and crumbs of stale bread must be added to his daily bill of fare, and upon such rations he will rear a numerous family without any fuss or bother whatever.

In their wild state these birds are natives of the eastern coasts of Australia, not penetrating very far inland, and usually consorting in small companies of six or eight individuals, which are probably an old pair, and their offspring of the year. In her native country the female Turquoise has two broods in the season, of from three to five each; but in domesticity she is almost as indefatigable a breeder as the Cockatiel, producing from three to five broods in the year, and laying from four to eight eggs each time. Incubation lasts about eighteen days, but it is rather difficult to ascertain exactly, as she is apt to resent interference, and, if much molested, to forsake her nest.

As far back as 1861 the Turquoise was bred in Germany, and in Belgium; and in the London Zoological Gardens some of these birds have been bred almost every season for many years back.

A good many of these charming Parrakeets are annually reared on the continent, especially in Belgium and in Germany, while even in our own cold and changeable climate a brood of young Torquoisines is not by any means of such rare occurrence, as might be imagined by persons unacquainted with foreign birds and their wonderful adaptability to all kinds of adverse circumstances and conditions.

Few members of the Parrot family are more elegant and graceful in figure than the Turquoise; and, generally speaking, they are particularly quiet and amiable birds; exceptions to this rule, however, occur now and then, and the connoisseur would do well to ascertain the disposition of a particular pair before giving them their liberty in a mixed aviary, where, occasionally, some of these habitually gentle birds have been known to play the tyrant over their smaller and more defenceless companions. But birds of all kinds vary so much in character and disposition that it is almost impossible from experience of a dozen individuals of any variety, to predicate what the idiosyncrasy of the thirteenth will be, and caution should always be observed when introducing any bird, or birds, no matter how reputedly gentle and amiable, into an aviary that is already occupied by tenants of the same, of kindred, and especially of totally distinct species.

The Turquoise on first arrival in this country is decidedly delicate, but a little careful nursing will soon restore it to health; the only complaints we have known these birds to suffer from are egg-binding and disease of the liver; the latter induced by too liberal an indulgence in hemp-seed; canary-seed, with a few oats, and a morsel of dry bread

will keep them in splendid health for years, particularly if they live in a well-grassed aviary out of doors: in the house, too much green food is apt to induce diarrhæa, and groundsel must be given sparingly, unless small and grown on very poor ground: but tufts of grass in flower will afford a rich treat which we have never known to disagree.

Egg-binding is a troublesome and too often fatal complication, of which the cause, or causes, are somewhat obscure, and which, in point of fact, is more readily prevented than cured. It may, we think, be taken for granted that a bird that suffers from egg-binding is a weak bird; consequently the aviarist should see that his pairs are in vigorous health, before he thinks of putting them up for breeding, or certain disappointment will be the result. If the cock is weak, the eggs run a great chance of being sterile, and if the hen is not in good health, either she will not lay, or will be egg-bound, or, worst fatality of all, she will die on her nest, after having deposited her eggs, or when her young brood are half-reared.

Here again prevention is preferable to cure, and if the birds are young, strong, and have plenty of room for exercise, not much need be feared: they will set about the work of reproducing their species with commendable assiduity, and their owner will derive not only pleasure, but profit, from their endeavours, for, as we have said, they are prolific in captivity, and the young of one season will, themselves, be parents in the next. An esteemed correspondent writes: "I think a great source of egg-binding is from the birds being too fat, from a continual diet of seed; I have found it so among poultry. Pullets when first beginning to lay are very liable to it when fed on maize, which makes them also very fat."

It has been remarked that in-breeding is very prejudicial to some species, but is not particularly so in the case of the Turquoise; though how far the sib-crossing might be carried with impunity, is somewhat difficult to determine: in any case the aviarist will do well to introduce new blood occasionally, and should he chance to notice any deterioration, either in point of colour, or of size, or strength, in his in-bred birds, he should, at once, separate the related pairs, and mate them with birds of a strange stock, but, of course, of the same species.

As we have seen it stated that the Turquoise is a quarrelsome and tyrannical bird, we can but repeat, that we have not found it to be so, and such is also the opinion of Dr. Russ, who observes: "*Ein reizendes Vögelchen, welches ebensowol an Farbenpracht, als auch an Anmuth und Liebenswürdigkeit in der grossen Mannigfaltigkeit aller Stubenvögel überhaupt einen hohen Rang einnimmt.*" (A charming little

bird, which not only by its handsome plumage, but its grace and amiability occupies a high position among the diversified inmates of the bird-room.)

Mr. Wiener says the Turquoise is "lively and interesting", but does not allude to its disposition, from which omission we may at least conclude that he did not find it hurtful to its companions.

Mr. Gedney says: "For my own part I candidly confess that Turquoisines hold the most prominent place in my estimation of the tribe to which they belong." In the concluding paragraph of the same chapter he remarks: "I ought to add that Turquoisines are extremely gentle in disposition, rarely resenting any interference on the part of weaker birds, and it is also worthy of note that they may be handled with perfect safety, as they very seldom bite, and when they do it is scarcely more severe than the nip from a Canary's beak."

On the other hand, a correspondent of the *Bazaar* wrote: "The Turquoisines seem very cross-grained, especially the hen, who scolds at any bird approaching her, and is never happy if there be another on the seed-tray at the same time as herself." But, as we have already more than once remarked, all the members of one species have not the same disposition; and even in the most amiable family one is apt to meet with a cantankarous individual now and then.

We cannot bring ourselves to believe, however, that the process of "manufacturing" hen out of cock Turquoisines has ever been had recourse to in this country, and that for the best of all reasons, it would not "pay", because it would be sure to be found out: however, the following is the *modus operandi* as related by a recent writer on Parrots and Parrakeets:—"The process consists in pulling out the red patch upon the wings, and destroying the blue face markings by means of caustic, which changes the mask to a dingy brown, leaving only the blue band upon the forehead. The neck feathers receive a few touches from the same magic wand, and the result is a very fair imitation of a hen,"—which, we may add, would in a couple of weeks' time be proved to be an impostor by the growth of the red shoulder spot: no, the fraud would not "pay", and we think amateurs need have no fear of being imposed upon by such a paltry swindle.

The young are greyish green, and without any of the distinctive markings found in the adult birds; they soon moult, however, and in three or four months from the time of leaving the nest, are not to be distinguished from their parents, with whom they continue to remain closely associated until instinct, the following spring, impels them to set up housekeeping on their own account, when, as we have already observed, it will be well to provide them with other mates than their

own brothers and sisters; for consanguineous marriages are to be deprecated among birds as much as among the "lords of Creation."

Except during the breeding season these pretty birds are, however, apt to be listless and uninteresting; but as soon as the advent of spring has "turned their thoughts to love", they become exceedingly lively and amusing.

In April, or May, they usually begin to evince a desire to make their nest, and should then be provided with suitable hollow logs, or small boxes in the bottom of which is cemented half of a cocoa-nut husk, the natural concavity and softness of which afford a very comfortable nesting-place. The attention and tenderness displayed at this season towards his mate by the male is touching in the extreme, for he is the most exemplary of husbands, and his love-song is flute-like, and not by any means unpleasing, as obtains in some members of the family.

Of course, if it be desired to achieve complete success with these birds, they should be given a good-sized garden aviary to themselves, where they will rear brood after brood with praiseworthy assiduity; and it is better not to remove the young ones until the close of the breeding-season, as they do not interfere with their parents, and their presence decidedly imparts confidence to the latter, and encourages them to further efforts in the direction of perpetuating the species: at the same time they will breed in a mixed aviary, and even, it is asserted, in a cage; but upon the latter point we are without personal experience.

On the whole this bird can be strongly recommended to amateurs, and it is to be regretted that it is so seldom to be obtained, and then only at a figure that places its possession beyond the reach of connoisseurs who do not chance to be possessed of a plethoric purse.

Hybrids have been produced between this and several kindred species, but are without anything to recommend them to the notice of aviarists, as they are, of course, sterile, and present in appearance a somewhat confused jumble of the colours and shape of their ill-assorted parents: we have no liking for hybrids of any kind, for we are of opinion that we cannot improve upon the works of Nature, or rather Nature's God, who has, indeed, made all things well.

There is no doubt that birds of all kinds are happier in a large well-furnished aviary than in a cage, however spacious the latter may be; and if the former be placed out of doors, in such a position that it can receive the first rays of the morning sun, so much the better for the health and comfort of the inmates: if the ground of the open portion be well turfed it is even possible in many instances to keep

trees and shrubs alive, and if this can be done it adds very considerably to the attractiveness of the *coup d'œil*; but unhappily, as a rule, Parrots and Parrakeets have such an inveterate propensity for "whittling", that it is almost impossible to get a plant of any kind to grow in any enclosure where they are kept.

Still this can be done, as the following extract from a letter of one of our correspondents fully shows:—"My conservatory is large, and kept at, at least, temperate heat. The plants are Palms, Dracænas, Tree-Ferns, etc.; I have not found the plants injured except by Weavers, which I have discarded, and, strange to say, Turquoisines. My Budgerigars have done no harm whatever, but the Turquoisines compelled me to get rid of them (very reluctantly), from their nibbling the young leaves of an Euphorbia for which I gave twenty-five guineas, and from its being clear that they would practically spoil it, if I left them in the house."

From the above it is apparent that trees and some birds are not incompatible, although our experience with Undulated Parrakeets is the reverse of that of our correspondent, we have always found them most destructive to trees and shrubs, and this also is the record of M. Léon Mary, from whose charming little book, *La Perruche Ondulée*, we shall have occasion to quote further on.

In his interesting work on the *Psittacidae*, Mr. Gedney doubts whether such a bird as "The Blue-banded Grass Parrakeet" has any existence in fact, although described as a distinct species by several writers; we believe that it is neither more nor less than a Turquoise in its brightest summer attire: but these vexed questions can only, as we have already remarked, be set at rest by careful observation of the birds under consideration from their cradle to their grave; and, lest confinement in a restricted area should mar the symmetry of their form, and the brilliance of their colouring, the aviary in which they are kept should be of the largest possible dimensions, well provided with trees and shrubs, which for convenience of replacing them when marred by the birds, should be planted in large pots; it should be well grassed too, and be provided, where practicable, with a constant supply of running water.

Birds so situated, would, by their beauty and vivacity, quite surprise a spectator who had only been accustomed to see them pent up in a cage, where, too often, they have barely room to turn themselves round, and always look untidy, miserable, and dejected.



ELEGANT PARRAKEET.

ELEGANT PARAKEET.

Psittacus elegans, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Euphema elegans*, GLD., GR., FNSCH.; *Nanodes elegans*, GLD.

GERMAN: *Der Ziersittich*.

THIS handsome bird is, we believe, only a local variety of the species just described, which it resembles in almost every particular; the same dark green vesture, enlivened by a blue band round the beak, and blue markings on the shoulders and wing coverts; the under surface is also yellow, deepening to orange at the vent: the one point of difference is that the Elegant has less blue on the wing than the Turquoise.

The female very closely resembles her mate, but has less of the blue markings on the face than he has, and the golden hue of the lower surface is, in her case, washed with a greenish tinge, the vent feathers are also paler, being yellow rather than orange.

The young are like their mother, but duller of tint; however they moult when six or seven months old, and can then no longer be distinguished from their parents.

Not only does this bird resemble the Turquoise in appearance and size, but in habits and in the possession of a tolerably musical voice, especially during the earlier days of his courtship, when he sings and dances before his mate in a manner which, to her, no doubt is charming, but which, to the human beholder, verges closely on the ridiculous. The Elegant is a gentle bird, and may be kept in a mixed collection, but is not as likely to breed in such a situation as if he and his wife were given a good-sized aviary for their own exclusive benefit. It is said that these birds will breed in a large aviary cage, but upon this point also we are without personal experience.

We are disposed to believe that the Elegant and the Turquoise belong to the same species, and that the main point of difference

between them, the absence of the red shoulder spot in the former, is not sufficient to separate them: they are probably no more than local varieties of one species, to which this bird, the Turquoise, and most probably the Splendid Parrakeet belong. This, however, could be readily ascertained were the experiment of pairing them together made, which we think could very easily be accomplished, and then observing whether the offspring of these unions were fertile, or barren: if the former, then the fact would be established that the parent birds were merely varieties of one, and did not belong to two distinct species; but if the latter, it would be equally proved that those who adopt the separatist theory are right. Why cannot our Zoological Society constitute themselves arbitrators in this and many other kindred matters, and clear up the uncertainties and difficulties that now exist?

But we must not ask too much at once, the authorities at the "Zoo" have just completed a palatial residence for the serpents in their possession, and perhaps, by and bye, may turn their attention to the *Psittacidae*, and provide the melancholy inmates of their "Parrot House", which a recent writer on ornithology has, not inaptly, termed a "Chamber of Horrors", with an abode more in conformity with their active and lively habits than the narrow cages in which they are now immured, and in which so very many of them come to an untimely end.

We are quite sure that were a roomy, well lighted house built for the Parrots, with a series of spacious cages well fitted with logs, branches and old stumps of trees, provided for their accommodation, not only would the sight be one of the most attractive in the Gardens, but many of the species would breed, and the sale of the offspring, especially of rare varieties, prove no inconsiderable source of revenue to the Society, to whose consideration we commend the suggestion, which is as old as the days of Dr. Latham, who advocates the same thing in one of his works, printed more than half a century ago: Parrots he thought were as worthy of improved accommodation as monkeys, and, we may add, as snakes, and a good deal more deserving too.

In this connection we would fain make another suggestion for the benefit of our Society: to wit, let a small extra charge for admission to the new house be made, say twopence, or even a penny, and the Society would soon recoup themselves for the outlay of building; visitors, we are inclined to think, at least the great majority of them, would look at the matter in the same light, and raise no objection to the enhanced cost of a peep at all the curiosities of the "Zoo", for would they not get a great deal more value for their money, in watching the merry gambols of the liberated Parrots and Parrakeets in their new homes, than they do at present, when they see nothing

but a series of moping forms, with more or less ruffled plumage, and listen to a series of discordant, if not appalling shrieks? we think there is no doubt about it, and hope the suggestion now made will be attended to.

"In the cage it endures better than the preceding species", (the Turquoise), says Dr. Russ, in his *Handbook*; "it has even bred in several instances, but in all other respects it resembles it."

The same author asserts that it lays from four to seven eggs ("Gelege 4—7 Eier"), which is about the number deposited by the Turquoise; another proof of the close similarity existing between these so-called separate species of the Grass Parrakeet sub-family of the *Psittacidae*.

Writing of the Elegant, Mr. Gedney observes: "I was greatly amused upon one occasion to watch the impertinent molestation offered to a pair of these birds by a saucy little Zebra Finch. This tiny champion had snugly ensconced himself, with his little wife, at the entrance of the hollow in which was deposited two Elegant's eggs, the owners of which had incautiously left their treasures for a few seconds only. They were now in great dismay to find the entrance of their house in possession of the enemy; and as each in turn advanced to assert their right of ingress, out came the little cock Zebra, like a miniature bull-dog, driving the poor Parrakeets in dismay before his furious attack. Then would the champion return, blow off a series of blasts from his trumpet, and settle down by the side of his wife again to receive her caresses. This performance was repeated several times, and so much did I enjoy the sight that I abstained from coming to the rescue by routing the offenders. At last the Elegants obtained a victory by stratagem. The pair advanced, one on either side of the hole, and out came the Zebra as usual, but whilst his attention was directed against one Parrakeet, the other slipped into the nest, inflicting a sharp bite upon the little hen Zebra in passing, and causing her to fly off in great trepidation. Whether or not her husband was ashamed of his defeat, I am unable to say, but he never afterwards ventured to interfere with his opponents, and they successfully reared a fine brood of birds."

Mr. Gedney adds a number of interesting details, and mentions that "the eggs (of the Elegant Parrakeet) are laid on alternate days", which, however, judging from analogy, we cannot consider to be the general habit of these birds, for Turquoisines lay every day, and, as we have already said, we consider that a very close affinity exists between the two species, if species they really be, and not merely varieties the one of the other.

We have had Budgerigars and Cockatiels that laid on alternate days, acting in that respect contrary to the usual habit of their congeners; and a Red-rump that allowed three days to elapse between each egg; but we consider such birds to be wanting in vigour; and never found that they produced "a fine brood of birds", but that their eggs were very frequently unfruitful, and that when young were hatched, these were invariably weak, and not unfrequently misshapen, or rickety, or incapable of flight.

Constipation seems to be the chief ailment of the Elegant Parrakeet, to obviate which, as it often gives rise to "fits", we advise an abundant supply of growing grass, in flower and seed, and crumbs of stale bread soaked in cold water, and squeezed nearly dry.

If proof were wanting to convince some people, who hold the contrary opinion, that water is necessary for Parrots and Parrakeets, the experience of the late Mr. Gould, as related in his magnificent work on *The Birds of Australia*, ought to be sufficient. "I found myself surrounded", says that writer, "by numbers (of Grass Parrakeets) breeding in the hollows spouts of the large *Eucalypti* bordering the Mokai; and on crossing the plains between that river and the Peel, in the direction of the Turi mountains, I saw them in flocks of many hundreds, feeding upon the grass seeds that are there abundant. So numerous were they, that I determined to encamp upon the spot, in order to observe their habits, and to procure specimens. The nature of their food and the excessive heat of these plains compel them frequently to seek the water; hence my camp, which was pitched near some small fords, was constantly surrounded by large numbers, arriving in flocks varying from twenty to a hundred or more. The hours at which they were most numerous were early in the morning, and some time before dark in the evening."

From the above extract it will be seen that in their native land these birds drink freely; and such is also our experience with many species in different parts of the Australian bush, where we have frequently seen large flocks resorting, as Mr. Gould describes, morning and evening to the water holes.

Although the Elegants and other Grass Parrakeets like to fly in company, they do not care to have their habitations in too close proximity to one another, so that if several pairs are kept in the same aviary, this will require to be of considerable extent, so that the birds may not be crowded, or they certainly will not breed; the jealousy of the males preventing proper fertilization of the eggs, and if one pair only be kept, the results would be much more satisfactory.



JAYAN PARRAKEET.

JAVAN PARRAKEET.

Psittacus Alexandri, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Psittacus fasciatus*, MLL.; *Psittacus Javanicus*, OSB.;

Psittacus pondicerianus, GML.; *Psittacus Osbeckii*, LTH.;

Psittacus mistaceus, SHW.; *Palæornis pondicerianus*, VGRS.; *Palæornis Javanicus*, GR.; *Palæornis Vibrisca et Alexandri*, FNSCH.

GERMAN: *Der Alexandersittich von Java*.

IT is to be regretted, as productive of confusion, that the name of the Macedonian conqueror of India should have been bestowed upon no less than five distinct species of Parrots, and still more so that to two of these should have been added the specific designation "Javan": but so it is, and nothing now remains to be done beyond attempting to clear up the uncertainty that exists, by restricting, as far as possible, the names to the one species only, which Dr. Russ has done in the present instance, and, as it appears to us, most appropriately.

The true Javan Parrot, *Psittacus Alexandri*, is found, as its name implies, in the Island of Java; and, as it also occurs in Borneo, Sumatra, and especially in the Malaccan peninsula, there seems to us no adequate reason why it should not have been one of the several species carried back with them, on their return to Europe, by the followers of Alexander the Great, to grace the triumph of their master, on his arrival in his native land, at the conclusion of his hazardous but gloriously successful expedition, and we are of opinion that the doctor has made out his case, so that in future, when we speak of the Javan Parrakeet, we are to be understood as meaning none other than the bird of which we are now treating.

The general colour of this Parrakeet is dark grass green on the upper half of the body, whilst the under portions are yellowish green; the head and cheeks are greyish yellow; the nape and back of the neck

bright green; the chin black; the throat and breast are vinous red; the wing coverts flecked with large olive spots; the beak is red; the long tail is yellow on its under surface, and gives a graceful finish to the bird, which is of extremely elegant proportions.

In the female the forehead, throat, and sides of the head and neck are pale orange; an oval black streak descends from the corners of the beak towards the throat; the nape, the top of the neck, the shoulders, back, rump, and upper part of the tail, are grass green. The breast and belly are bright green.

It is about fourteen inches in length, of which the tail measures rather more than half: it is not of frequent occurrence in the dealers' shops, the few specimens that are to be occasionally met with having been brought over by private hands, rather than in the usual course of trade.

When acclimatised it is a fairly hardy bird, and requires to be treated as already recommended for other members of the sub-family to which it belongs.

The other species upon which authors have imposed the name of Javan, is the *Psittacus Lathamii* of Russ, the *Palæornis Lathamii* of Finsch, with a number of aliases which it mostly shares with the species just described, to which it bears a close resemblance, and with which it is very frequently confounded. As it does not occur in Java, but is common on the Indian mainland, extending into Cochin China, it has certainly no claim to be called "Javan", whatever right it may have to the name of Alexander, which, however, has been elsewhere bestowed.

The head and face of this species are bluish grey, the throat and breast are vinous red, with a bluish reflection in certain lights, the under surface is bluish green; a black streak extends from the insertion of the mandibles on each side, nearly meeting at the back of the neck; the upper mandible of the beak is red, and the under mandible black; it is found in large flocks throughout India, and in the vicinity of Calcutta is one of the commonest birds.

The German name of this species is *Der rosenbrüstige Alexandersittich*: it is described by Bechstein under the name of *Der Zweyfleckige Sittich* (*Psittacus bimaculatus*), and appears to have been generally confounded with the preceding species: but the old German author was certainly in error when he assigned "Botany Bay" to it as a habitat. "It is very docile, amiable and talkative", he says. "Its mildness is pleasing, and it is extremely affectionate and caressing."

We have not found it "talkative", but, on the contrary, dull in the acquisition of articulate speech.

As there is not much difference in the outward appearance of the Javan Parrakeet, properly so called, and its Indian congener, so the two species bear a close resemblance to each other in their mental capacities: they are certainly docile, and not very noisy, but not particularly susceptible of education. If they do not make themselves as disagreeable as some of their relatives by their harsh outcries, neither do they recommend themselves to the notice of amateurs by their powers of speech; an odd specimen, here and there, with much painstaking teaching, will learn a few words, but, as a rule, they cannot be classed with the "Talking Parrots", at least in our opinion, although Dr. Russ has given instances in which some of these birds have evinced considerable powers of imitation.

This, however, is not to be wondered at, nor should it be taken as an indication, or a proof, that our estimation of the Javan Parrakeet and its near relative is wrong, for in every race, in every species, will be found individuals who in intelligence and docility leave the mass of their fellows immeasurably behind them, and push themselves forward, by sheer force of individual merit, to the foremost ranks, whether of birds or men; and this no doubt was the case with the birds spoken of by the eminent ornithologist of Berlin.

So far as we are aware these birds have not yet been bred in Europe, although, in our opinion, from their quiet habits, and susceptibility of being perfectly tamed, there should be no difficulty in the way of their reproduction: but probably the attempt to breed them has never been seriously made.

Should it be desired to see these birds nest and bring up their young in captivity, we are of opinion that a pair of young individuals, fairly tamed and thoroughly acclimatised, should be turned, about May, into a good-sized garden aviary, or even a bird-room, appropriately furnished with hollow logs, or boxes, in the bottom of which half a cocoa-nut husk should be firmly cemented, well supplied with food and water, and, in case of their being placed in a room, an abundance of light and air, but a thorough immunity from draughts; they should not be too frequently disturbed, but should, nevertheless, be paid a visit every day, for the double purpose of replenishing their supplies of food and water, and of preventing their getting wild again, which they would be very apt to do, if left entirely to themselves.

Should eggs be laid and young ones hatched, it would be advisable to furnish the parents, in addition to their ordinary diet, with soaked seeds of several kinds, especially oats, and, when practicable, with rice in the husk, not forgetting a piece of bread a day old, part of which may be given dry, and the remainder slightly moistened with cold water.

In their wild state the Javans breed in holes in trees, laying three or four eggs, which are hatched in from eighteen to twenty-one days, and they usually have two broods in the season, which extends from February or March to July or August, when they fall into moult.

If kept out of doors, they should be provided with a snug retreat to which they can retire, when minded to do so, during wet and cold weather: they do not bathe much, but, like many other kinds of Parrots and Parrakeets, are fond of standing out in the rain, to catch the falling drops on their bodies, when they spread out their wings and tail with every indication of delight, to receive the passing shower as it gently descends upon their backs from Heaven. They are fond, too, of rolling themselves in wet grass, or flying swiftly through the terminal branches of trees after or during a fall of rain, when they often suck up, rather than drink, the pearly drops of water adhering to the leaves.

It is scarcely necessary to repeat, after all we have said upon the subject of keeping captive Parrots from drinking, that the Javan should never be debarred from water, for which "sop", especially bread and milk sop, is not by any means a substitute; but is, on the contrary, a fertile source of ill-health with these poor birds, by forcing them to over-eat themselves, in order to obtain a sufficiency of moisture to supply the demands of their system.

Fruit and green meat, such as we have already recommended for other species, should also be provided, sparingly in cold weather, but freely during the warm summer months, and especially if there are young birds in the nest to be fed.

Java, where our Parrot chiefly abounds, being a Dutch possession, it is of more common occurrence on the continent, and especially in Holland, than with us, but even there it commands a high price, being quoted at from sixty to ninety marks (shillings) in his *Handbook* by Dr. Russ, and this is the more to be regretted that, as may be gathered from what has been said about it in the preceding pages, it is a very desirable bird, well suited by its habits and disposition for domesticity, but it is out of the English dealers' groove, and hence is seldom seen in England.

We know of few prettier sights than a large aviary full of Parrots and Parrakeets, flying, climbing, hopping, and tumbling about all over the place; their bright colours, generally elegant shapes, and lively active movements where they have room to exercise their wings, cannot fail to make a favourable impression on the observer, especially if by chance he should happen to be deaf.

We must confess that there is a black side to this charming picture,

for a *perrucherie* is a pandemonium for noise; witness the Parrot-house at the "Zoo", in which, with the strongest possible inclination to remain and study the inmates, we have always found it impossible to stay for more than a few minutes at a time.

During the breeding-season, however, comparative silence reigns in an aviary of Parrots; the various couples therein domiciled being too intent upon their domestic arrangements to have much time for neighbourly conversation, hence the unwonted quiet that prevails while eggs are being hatched, or young ones fed, that is as long as the latter remain warmly ensconced under the paternal and maternal wing, for when they have outgrown their natal nest-box, they make confusion worse confounded by their squeaking and incessant demands for food.

Such a Parrot aviary as we have in our mind would be a source of never-ending interest, and amusement, too, to its fortunate possessor, for these birds have a vast amount of individuality, and take as much studying to know them thoroughly as men. The grave and the gay, the indolent and the active, the gentle and the quarrelsome, the greedy and the abstemious, are each and all represented in a collection of Parrots and Parrakeets; while occasionally one personage out of perhaps half a hundred keeps the whole place in an uproar, and makes himself so universally disliked, that to ensure peace his removal becomes a matter of necessity.

After a while, however, the community settles down, each pair, each individual, soon finds his and their level, the rulers are tacitly recognised, allowed the first place at the seed pan and the water trough, the choice of nest-box, and the most comfortable position on the sleeping perch, and then all goes as merrily as a marriage ball, which actually, if the weather only be propitious, very soon takes place, for one of the funniest features of Parrot married life, is the grotesque—grotesque that is in human eyes—dance of the male bird before the lady of his love.

To see him, and the habit is common to nearly the entire race, with ruffled plumes and outspread wings and tail, solemnly bobbing up and down before his spouse on the perch, or may be on the top of the nest-box, pausing every now and then in the performance to feed her with half-digested seeds, disgorged for her benefit from his crop, is a sight not readily forgotten, the croaking that accompanies the dance is the only disagreeable feature in the entertainment; and when we say "disagreeable", we also mean from the human point of view, for doubtless Herr Parrot's "song" is quite as pleasing to his *bien aimée* as the serenade of Romeo was to his Juliet.

Needless to plant trees or shrubs in an aviary of Parrots, but hollow

logs, trees even, will be a great boon to the inhabitants, affording them not only snug retreats in which to deposit their eggs, and hatch and bring up their young, but also an infinite fund of amusement, not to say delight, and exercise to boot, for nearly all the Parrots are born "whittlers", and if they have not a handy log 'convenient', as an Irishman would say, on which to exercise their powerful mandibles, they will find some other and more objectionable mode of whiling away the time, by quarrelling among themselves, or even turning to and plucking out their own feathers by the roots, until they leave themselves quite bare.

As soon as the young of one brood can feed themselves, it is desirable to remove them to other quarters, lest they interfere with the domestic arrangement of their parents, and prejudice the production of another brood. Of course overcrowding must be carefully avoided, and if a separate aviary can be given to each species, so much the better; but this is not absolutely, not even imperatively necessary, as most of these birds, the Javan Parrakeets especially, are fond of company, and thrive better in the society of their fellows than when kept alone by themselves.

*The Hon. and Rev. F. G. Dutton's account of the
Javan Parrakeet (Palæornis Javanicus).*

THIS bird is "the Whiskered Parrot", "*P. bimaculatus*", of Bechstein. He gives it a better character for speaking than I can endorse; but I only kept two specimens. Those both had the same character. They were very tame and gentle, not so noisy as the Bengal Parrakeet, though still gifted with a power of making one jump every now and then. They were not good talkers: one never got beyond "Pretty Polly," nor the other beyond a few words of Hindustani. Perhaps if their education had been regularly attended to, they might have developed further powers of speech; as far as tameness went, they left nothing to be desired.

Unlike the Bengal Parrakeet, neither of them seemed to care about washing. They feed, like the Bengal, on canary, hemp, and millet seed. I find sopped bread is a question of education with all the *Palæornis* tribe. Some like bread and milk, some like bread and water, and others will have nothing but plain water. It depends upon how they have been brought up. Perhaps the same might be said of every Parrot.



KING PARROT, OR PARRAKEET

KING PARROT, OR PARRAKEET.

Psittacus cyanopygus, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Asprosmictus scapulatus*, GLD.; *Psittacus scapulatus*, KHL.;

Platycercus scapulatus, VGRS.; *Platycercus cyanopygus*, FNSCH.; etc.

GERMAN: *Der Königs-Sittich*.

THIS Parrot is very generally, but erroneously, called the King Lory, for it undoubtedly belongs to the *Platycerci*, and not to the Lories: it is a large handsome bird, slightly exceeding the well-known Grey Parrot in size, and with a very much longer tail: the head, neck, and all the under surface of the body, including the under tail coverts, are deep red, while the back and wings are dark green, growing deeper and deeper in shade to the tail, which is nearly black; the under surface of the tail feathers is black; the rump is blue, and the wings are marked with a spot of very light green. The feet are leaden grey, the upper mandible is orange red, with a black tip, and the lower black above, and below a dark slate grey.

The female, or Queen, is such a totally different-looking bird, that she was formerly considered by naturalists to belong to a different species. The general colour of her plumage is dingy green, with a reddish shade on the breast, and a deeper tinge of the same colour on the abdomen and the under tail coverts: the tail is not of such a deep blue black green as in the male, and she is a trifle smaller than her mate.

The young resemble their mother until their second year, when the males begin to assume the adult plumage. We have met with no published record of these handsome birds breeding in this country, but we have been assured that an amateur in an eastern county has succeeded more than once in obtaining a brood: and his mode of procedure was one so well calculated to ensure success, that our readers will doubtless be grateful to us for detailing the *modus operandi*

for their benefit. A pair of adult King Parrots were placed in an out-door aviary, only a portion of which was protected from the weather, the interior was fitted up with logs suitable for nesting places, and the whole of the back covered with pieces of virgin cork. The King and Queen soon made themselves at home in their new abode, and commenced by looking out for a house among the hollow logs of various sizes that had been placed at their disposal by the owner: none of these, however, seemed to be to their taste, and after trying first one and then another, they gave up the logs as a bad job altogether, and selected for their residence a ledge under the roof in the inner portion of their abode, which was shaded from observation by a broad piece of cork, and on this ledge the Queen deposited her eggs, how many in number the owner could not tell, for he was afraid of disturbing the birds by looking, and in due course the hen hatched and reared her young, sometimes two, sometimes three in number.

As they are naturally shy and timid, the King Parrots should not be placed in the company of any other birds, especially if it be desired to induce them to breed. Personally we have not made any attempt at breeding these birds, but they are so thoroughly hardy, that there should be no difficulty in getting them to nest.

Although natives of New South Wales and Queensland, these birds seem to suffer more from heat than from cold, seldom living many years in the house, but lasting for a long time in a properly constructed and well-sheltered aviary out of doors.

The most suitable food for these birds in the house is grain of all kinds, some of which had better be soaked for them, green food of all sorts, given more sparingly in winter than in summer, nuts and fruit, or even a slice of raw potato: they are very fond of bathing, and should always have an abundant supply of water within reach, but sop is an abomination that should never be offered to them, though a piece of sponge-cake or a biscuit will be relished, or even a slice of dry bread.

As the King Parrot grows slowly, it should be a long-lived bird, and, with proper care, is; but it cannot stand delicacies or coddling, which soon cause it to droop its wings and fade away, or to fall dead from its perch in a fit.

It will doubtless have been remarked that we have not hitherto touched upon what some writers make one of the most important features of their works, namely, the Diseases of Birds: our reason is that we consider domesticated birds when properly cared for have no diseases of a curable kind, and we have preferred giving plain directions for the suitable management of our pets, to a number of useless recipes

for curing complaints that, with a little care and attention, would never have supervened to worry the owner and to kill the bird.

Coughs are avoidable, so are fits, so is egg-binding, so are colds, inflammations, and congestions, so are constipation and diarrhæa, and so in point of fact are all the ills that captive birds are, not heirs, but liable to, when kept by persons who think only of themselves and neglect their prisoners, or who have their heads crammed full of useless and too often mischievous old-fashioned notions as to feeding, coddling, and depriving the poor creatures of water.

Depend upon it, diseases are more readily prevented than cured. Keep your birds out of draughts, feed them as you find recommended in these pages, give them room to exercise their wings and feet in, company and occupation, and you will find that there will be no diseases to cure, and that old age, for which there is no preventive, will at last gently and insensibly usher them into—we were about to write—a better land, but—after all who can tell whether the Great and Good Creator may not, in some portion of His boundless universe, have reserved a place where the unhappy members of what men are pleased to call the “brute” creation, may re-live their lives, and find compensation for the ills that, by no fault of theirs, they were made to suffer here? Who indeed! but we must forbear, the subject is not one for discussion in these pages.

The King Parrot is not a particularly bright or intelligent bird, still an odd male, now and again, will become exceedingly tame, and learn to repeat a few words, or even a short sentence, but to enable him to do even this, he must be taken in hand when very young, and much patience and perseverance be brought to bear upon the task. The female is a very silent bird, and we never knew one that learned to repeat even a single word: we are far, however, from saying that such a phenomenon as a talking Queen Parrot is impossible, but simply that we have neither seen nor heard of one.

It is unfortunately true, as an author who is well known as inimical to “dealers” asserts, that some importers of King Parrots “stove” up their birds to make them moult their nest feathers prematurely, and assume the adult garb, before the natural period for their doing so has come round, for we have seen the cruel practice in operation, and remonstrated, but were met by the assurance that the birds liked it, and that it agreed with them.

To which we replied that the poor things did not look as if they enjoyed being half-cooked alive in the dark, and that we believed a bird so treated was irretrievably weakened in constitution, and would never live out half its days: but a King “in colour” being worth more

than double the price of a young bird in the nestling garb, the practice is persisted in (not by all dealers, however), and is one that the R.S.P.C.A. might well occupy itself with.

Dr. Russ much admires this handsome bird, and says of it: "*Der größte und zugleich einer der prachtvollsten von allen diesen Sittichen*", (the largest, and at the same time one of the most magnificent of all these Parrakeets.)

Bechstein speaks of the King Parrot in his *Natural History of Cage Birds*, and says it is a native of Amboina, though he admits that he was told it came from "Botany Bay"; he describes the difference between the sexes correctly, yet Dr. Finsch, writing at a much later date, says that they are alike, "*beide Geschlechter gleich sein*", which Dr. Russ justly characterizes as "*ein Irrthum*", a mistake. But who is infallible? even the last-mentioned doctor, great authority as he undoubtedly is on bird matters, nods sometimes, as we may have occasion to point out later on.

The King Parrot is a very gentle and amiable bird, so much so, that it may be safely trusted in an aviary full of small birds, but in such a situation it is not at all likely that it will breed, as small birds are of a prying and inquisitive nature, and the King and Queen are shy, and brook no interference from anybody with their domestic arrangements: they do not punish, as they very well might, the intruder on their privacy, the disturber of their rest, they simply forsake the log or box they had intended to take up their abode in, and try again elsewhere: their motto, being, apparently, "Anything for a quiet life", and if very much disturbed they will give up the attempt, and leave their tormentors in possession of the ground: it is therefore necessary to give a pair of these birds a good-sized aviary, or bird-room, preferably the former, all to themselves, and we have no doubt, though we have not personally made the experiment, that so situated they would be certain to breed, and really the experiment is one that would be well worth trying, for these birds always command a good price in the market: and the only objection to raising them is that they are two years old before they don their adult plumage; but, on the other hand, they are small eaters, and cost but very little to keep.

In their own country the King Parrots eat, especially during the breeding season, a considerable number of insects, but they will do very well without such dainties in captivity; though, perhaps, if they had young ones to feed, it might be as well to supply them with a few mealworms daily: such a practice, however, is open to objection, for once begun, it would have to be continued, and mealworms are sometimes difficult to be obtained in this country, although in Germany

they are regularly bred; but in all bird-matters we are, as yet, very far behind our Teutonic friends.

Although, for its size, this species has not a very large or powerful beak, it is, nevertheless, as partial as any of its congeners to "whittling", and should always be provided with a piece of semi-decayed wood upon which to exercise its beak, and thus enable it to while away the time, which, doubtless, often hangs heavy enough—we were going to say upon its hands—but at all events it is, no doubt, frequently at a loss how to employ itself; occasionally turning round and plucking out its own feathers for want of something else to do.

It happens now and then that a Parrot having moulted does not regain its plumage, and the owner imagines that the bird itself eats its feathers, which is not the case, the poor thing has not the strength to reproduce them, and after a longer or shorter interval of wretched nakedness dies.

Such a bird is suffering from extreme debility, and requires in the first instance warmth; a temperature, say, of 70° Fahr., an abundance of nourishing food, chief of which is sound fresh hemp-seed, then sponge cake, canary-seed, lunch biscuit, apples, and nuts, and, for medicine, ten drops of Parrish's Chemical Food to each ounce of its drinking water. We have seen port-wine, brandy, and quinine recommended among many other things, but the regimen we have just described, will, unless the poor bird be too far gone, soon restore it to health, and the owner will have the pleasure of once more beholding his favourite clothed as Nature intended it should be.

As soon as the reparative process is complete, the temperature of the place where the bird is kept—a warm conservatory makes a capital bird-hospital—must be gradually and cautiously lowered to that in which it is decided to keep it, but draughts must be studiously avoided, or inflammation of the lungs is certain to set in, when, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, and in spite of the utmost care and attention, the poor creature will die.

Inflammation of the lungs, pneumonia, is much more readily prevented than cured in birds, but when it does occur, warmth and nourishment are the only remedies, and generally the sufferer will not feed, sometimes even it will not drink, though usually the thirst is excessive; in such a case we have seen it recommended to give milk and chicken-broth, and should be disposed to give the latter a trial; not cold, but just tepid, and if the bird would not take that, we should advise a small quantity to be poured down its throat every now and then with a spoon.

In a case that came under our own observation, the patient's cage

was wrapped up, all but a small space in front, in a blanket, and set upon the dresser in a very warm kitchen, where the fire was kept up, for the Parrot's especial benefit, all night as well as during the day; he was fed on sponge-cake and hemp-seed, he would eat nothing else, and a teaspoonful of sherry was put in his drinking water; in a couple of days he was all right, screaming and chattering as usual.

A lady of our acquaintance who has kept a King Parrot for four years, sends us the following interesting account of her pet:—"My King has been in my possession for four years, and the person who had him before me had kept him three years, so that he is at least eight years old, but probably nine, or more. I feed him upon canary-seed, hemp, and boiled maize, and supply him with plenty of coarse sand and fresh water; for he not only drinks freely, but is extraordinarily fond of washing himself. When he came into my possession he was in a very low weak state, and I thought I should have lost him; he had been dieted for some time on canary-seed only, and could scarcely stand, but by nursing him and giving him hemp and boiled maize, and biscuit, captain biscuit, which I used to chew for him, he soon came round, and has never ailed anything since. He is very tame and gentle, and talks very nicely: some of the sentences he pronounces very distinctly, 'Polly, put the kettle on'; 'Mother, call the doctor'; 'Mother, kiss your darling'; 'Kiss Sukey, there's a dear', and so on: he is rather shy and silent before strangers, but is very talkative and amusing when I am with him in the room alone. He is in very fine condition, and apparently in the best of health."

For the correctness of this description we can vouch, for we have rarely seen a bird of this species in better feather, although he is kept in the heart of London; he does not seem, however, to miss the fresh air in the least, but appears to be perfectly happy and contented: for companions he has a Grey Parrot, a Cockatiel, several Canaries, and some Collared Doves.



SPLENDID PARRAKEET.

SPLENDID PARRAKEET.

Psittacus splendidus, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Euphema splendida*, GLD., GR.; *Euphema chrysostoma*, WGL.

GERMAN: *Der Glanzsittich*.

THE vast, sparsely timbered plains of Western Australia, clad during part of the year with abundant verdure, chiefly consisting of a strong coarse grass, known to the settlers by the name of Kangaroo-grass, from the partiality with which it is regarded by the herbivorous Marsupials in general, and the Kangaroos and Wallabies in particular, afford a secure asylum for a number of beautiful Parrakeets, many of which are extremely local in their distribution, and two or three of which are, perhaps, even better entitled to the specific designation *splendidus* than the subject of the present notice, upon whom it has been bestowed by several authors.

“Every eye”, says the proverb, “makes its own beauty”; that is to say, every eye has its own standard of perfection, by which it measures, often unconsciously, the objects that are being continually passed in review before it, and not unfrequently the popular judgment is reversed by a private decision; but, more frequently, the strongest views of a single individual have to give way before the fiat of the majority, which is exactly the case in the present instance, where we refrain from pressing our private opinion on the public, in deference to that of the ornithologists whose names are affixed to the synonyms of the lovely bird that forms the subject of the present chapter.

Pennant’s Parrakeet, for instance, has been described under the specific title “splendid” by a number of writers, and we think with better judgment, but as that is a matter of opinion, we shall not, as we have said, dispute the point; although so strong were the feelings of Shaw upon the subject, that he went beyond even Gould in his admiration for the bird to whom he applied the epithet of *gloriosus*, namely, the grand Parrakeet named after Mr. Pennant.

The Splendid Parrakeet, although not to say uncommon in its native land, is very rarely imported into ours, which is the more to be regretted that it is a grass-seed eater, and not more difficult to preserve in captivity than the Turquoise and the Elegant.

Seen running nimbly over the ground, among the long grass, the Splendid Parrakeet might, by its green back, blue face, and wings edged with blue, be taken for a Turquoise; but when, alarmed by the approach of an intruder upon its ancestral domain, it rises with a "whirr" that somewhat reminds the beholder of a Partridge, and flies to the nearest she-oak, banksia, or mimosa, the deep red neck and breast reveal the fact that it is another and quite different bird.

It is rather smaller than the Turquoise, and of equally slim and graceful build. The nest is made in a hollow bough, where the female lays three or four eggs on the soft wood, hatching them in about eighteen days; and there are usually two broods in the season.

The movements of this bird are in a great measure regulated by the supply of food; thus in one district where the crop of grass has been good, the Grass Parrakeets, with the Splendid at their head, abound; although in the next, where either a "Squatter's" flocks, or the presence of an unusual number of the indigenous mammals, or perhaps of the prolific rodent so recently imported from the mother country, and which in the land of its adoption has displayed a fecundity so marvellous that it actually threatens to drive not only the native animals, but man himself from the scene, where, in such a case, the grass has been either totally consumed, or at least prevented seeding, these birds are of rare occurrence; while if a bush-fire has recently desolated the land, they are not to be seen at all.

When the breeding season is over they all retire to the far interior, to reappear on and near the southern coasts, as the season of love and marriage invites them to the fulfilment of the all-important duties of reproduction; which, accomplished, they retire once more to their favourite fastnesses, and it is on these journeys that the trapper could make of them an easy prey.

It is much to be desired that dealers would endeavour to procure some of the rarer members of the family, instead of confining their attention to the importation of the few species they usually keep in stock, and which are as familiar to amateurs as the Linnet and the Robin: we might then hope to become more intimately acquainted with the subject of the present notice, and others of its beautiful congeners, now quite unknown to the great majority of the English bird-loving public.

It is difficult to understand the apathy of traders in this respect,

for the importation of a rare bird is sure to cause a flutter in the breasts of connoisseurs, who rush to purchase it with one accord, as soon as its advent has been made known, when the dealer has only to name, in order to obtain his price for the phenomenon: and even in those rare cases where the sum demanded is beyond the limit of even the largest private purse, our "Zoo", or one of the continental Zoological Societies is certain to step in and secure the prize, no matter at what enormous figure, or, as the French say, "*prix fou*."

A Grass Parrakeet, or seed-eater, the Splendid Parrakeet is not a difficult bird to keep, so that the £10 or so given for him is much more safely invested, than if risked upon a couple of pairs of Paradiesas, or Many-coloured Parrakeets. Canary, millet, and oats should form his staple diet; a handful of sweepings from the hayloft thrown into the aviary will afford him amusement in picking out the seeds, as well as a welcome change of food; and, should he chance to go to nest, as he probably would, if lodged according to his notion of the fitness of things, dry crumb of bread should not be forgotten; a little hemp is permissible, as a variety, now and then, and the same may be said of flax and maw-seed: tufts of flowering grass in the season, or a bunch of half-ripe French millet will form an agreeable change in his bill of fare, but must not, at first, be supplied with too lavish a hand; groundsel tops and dandelion flowers he is also fond of, while mignonne in blossom, or just commencing to seed, will be much appreciated.

Lodged and fed as recommended, we have no doubt the Splendid Parrakeet would soon cease to be the *rara avis* of our collections, for he would then certainly breed, and, ere long, we should be almost, if not altogether, independent of a foreign supply for this charming bird, now so rare that we venture to say not one in ten of our readers has ever seen it alive; for the home production of the species would soon be adequate to meet all demands: he is not delicate either, which is yet another point scored in his favour, and as, at least for some time to come, he is certain to command a high price in the market, it would certainly be worth the while of amateurs to attempt to breed him in captivity.

One point, however, demands attention,—the Splendid Parrakeet is of somewhat uncertain temper: like his relative the Turquoise, one individual may be of a purely angelic disposition, affable and kind to all his neighbours, small, no less than great; and another may have a temper of exactly the opposite kind, and commit sad havoc before his unfriendly behaviour to his fellow-captives is discovered, and he himself removed from their society, tried and condemned to duration vile for the term of his natural life.

On the whole, however, the Splendid one is not an unamiable bird, but rather the reverse, and as he is handsome, hardy and expensive, it is to be hoped some of the leading dealers in the "fancy" will advise their correspondents in Western Australia to look him up, capture and send over to us a few more of these desirable birds than they have hitherto done; and we feel sure that if they take our advice, they will find that they have made a more profitable venture than if they had imported some two or three times the number of Paradise Parrakeets, or Blue Mountain Lories; for, even if they asked for the Splendid three times the price of either of the foregoing species, they would be sure to get it, and the purchasers, too, would make an infinitely better bargain.



ORANGE-BELLIED PARRAKEET.

ORANGE-BELLIED PARRAKEET.

Psittacus aurantius.

SYNONYM: *Euphema aurantia*, GLD.

THIS charming bird, which a recent writer considers to be a creation of the late John Gould's imagination, is, nevertheless, a very real Parrot, or rather Parrakeet, exceedingly abundant in Van Diemen's Land, and the islands in Bass's Straits, during the summer months, and seldom to be met with on the Australian mainland except during the winter.

Few importations of any consequence take place from the beautiful island, now called Tasmania, after its discoverer, who gave it the discarded appellation by which it was long and unfavourably known, in honour of the father of his betrothed wife, an appellation that fell into disrepute, owing to the island having been used for many years as a penal settlement, but which the inhabitants got rid of as soon as the government of the colony was placed in their own hands.

Van Diemen's Land, now, more euphoniously, Tasmania, is a lovely and fertile island, blessed with an almost perfect climate, but little known to the overcrowded populations of the mother country, with which it has fewer and less important relations than any of her colonies; to which fact it is no doubt owing that so few of the many charming and eminently hardy birds that abound in her forests, find their way into our aviaries, and are practically unknown, not only to dealers and importers of foreign birds, but even to many English and continental naturalists of repute.

The subject of the present notice, the Gang-gang Cockatoo, or Parrot, (*Psittacus galeatus*, but not the *Psittacus galeatus* of Russ,) and the Ground Parrot (*Pezophorus formosus*, GLD.,) for instance, are cases in point: the dealers know them not, and even, some of them, try to persuade an enquirer that they have no existence: but Tasmania

has been "looking up" of late, and we hope that ere long the delightful bird under consideration will cease to be a *desideratum* with us over here.

At first sight the Orange-bellied Grass Parrakeet bears a strong resemblance to the Blue-banded, but a careful comparison reveals a considerable difference between them. The blue forehead band is not so conspicuous as in the case of the latter bird, while the orange tinting of the under surface is deeper, and more concentrated, forming a well-defined patch of a deep yellow, or rather orange colour between the thighs.

Gould found these birds existing in considerable numbers on the small islands at the entrance of Entrecasteaux's Channel, where he thought, though without having found any, that they laid their eggs on the ground, or among the stones on the shore, for there are no trees on the islands; but it is more likely that these Parrakeets go elsewhere to breed, as they are very strong on the wing, and able to fly a considerable distance without taking rest.

Their note is singular, resembling a sharp snapping sound, and forms a marked contrast to the more melodious call of the Elegant.

Though frequenting Tasmania and the adjacent islets, the Orange-bellied Parrakeet is also found on the mainland, especially in the low swampy grounds existing between the port of Adelaide and Holdfast Bay; and specimens collected in summer and in winter, and in different places, presented no appreciable difference in their plumage.

The female is generally like her mate, but the orange spot on her belly is fainter and not quite so large as his.

This bird is not found in New South Wales or Western Australia, and appears to be a winter visitant only to the colony of South Australia.

A strong family likeness runs through all the family of the Grass Parrakeets; the Blue-banded (*Euphema chrysostoma*), the Orange-bellied (*Euphema aurantia*), the Elegant (*Euphema elegans*), the Rock Grass Parrakeet (*Euphema petrophila*), the Turquoise (*Euphema pulchella*), and even the Splendid Grass Parrakeet (*Euphema splendida*), might all be taken for varieties of the same species, but there is little or no doubt that they are all different; the Blue-banded, however, and the Orange-bellied often fly in company, and might be considered identical, but for the points of difference we have pointed out, and which we consider sufficient to constitute them two distinct species.

Like all the Grass Parrakeets, the Orange-belly has the tarsi rather long, and runs with swiftness on the ground; its flight, too, is powerful, and well sustained.

The breeding season extends from September to January in their native country, or from Spring to Midsummer, corresponding to our March and July.

These birds are not often caged by the colonists, and the few specimens that are, now and then, to be met with in this country have been brought over privately by sailors or colonists returning "home", as the latter are wont, fondly, to designate the mother country, which, perhaps, they have never even seen, having been born and brought up upon the Island—the Island, as Tasmania is familiarly designated by the residents on the Australian mainland.

The Orange-bellied Parrakeet should, in captivity, be fed and treated exactly as we have recommended in the case of the Turquoise, than which it will be found not less hardy and desirable.

As a rule, all the birds that are indigenous to Tasmania are well suited to cage life, and may be looked upon as capable of being acclimatised, at least in our southern counties, if not in the far north of England, or in Scotland, for the Tasmania climate bears a great resemblance to that of Devon and Cornwall, and all our fruits and flowers thrive to perfection there, where the subtropical productions of the mainland are out of place.

The farmers of course are not very fond of the Orange-bellied one and its congeners, for these birds find it more convenient to dine off the well-tilled fields, or to pick up the newly-sown corn to foraging for native grass-seeds in the bush; but, on the other hand, they destroy a good many noxious grubs, for, especially during the breeding season, they are partially insectivorous in their habits, although in captivity they will thrive perfectly well without any insect food. They are fond of thistle-seeds too, and thistles, since the day when a luckless Scotchman introduced his national emblem, have been a plague to the Australian farmers and settlers generally; but their good deeds are forgotten, or overlooked, and their partiality for oats and corn alone remembered; so that these beautiful birds are ruthlessly destroyed, wherever found, and, in time, the race will become extinct, unless perpetuated in captivity.

Let amateurs then who are possessed of aviaries speak to the dealers from whom they get their birds, and ask for Orange-bellied Parrots from Tasmania, and the demand will promptly create a supply, not only of these, but of other beautiful denizens of the Tasmanian woods, of which the Ground Parrot, and the Gang-Gang Cockatoo (*Psittacus galeatus*), are, as we have already said, two of the most desirable: the latter bird especially has been known to naturalists ever since Cook and Dr. Banks explored the coasts of Australia and the adjacent

islands: it is about the size of the ordinary Grey Parrot, and resembles it rather closely in form and appearance, with the exception that it has a red crest, some two inches in length, which is permanently displayed like that of the Cockatiel; the female has a grey crest; it was described by Latham under the name of *Psittacus galeatus*, by Wagler under that of *Corydon galeatus*, and by Viellot under that of *Cacatua galeata*, albeit it is not a Cockatoo, but more nearly related to the *Platycerci*.

It is a great pity that the ornithological treasures of Tasmania are not more frequently imported, for, in consequence of the geographical position of that island, and the temperate climate it enjoys, its fauna is peculiarly adapted for acclimatisation in this country of ours: and English productions, whether animal or vegetable, that have been introduced into Tasmania, have all flourished there exceedingly, some even to an undesirable extent, for instance the rabbit and the thistle: it is a fruitful and charming isle, but no better at present than a "Sleepy Hollow"; its time will come, however, and perhaps before long: even now it is a *sanatorium* for the inhabitants of the mainland, exhausted by the heat of the Australian summer, and the fierce struggle for wealth that is always raging in the cities and towns of the young—old— island continent on the opposite side of Bass's Straits, where people make haste to get rich, in order to, with as little delay as possible, go "home", in nine cases out of ten, to die.



BOURKE'S PARAKEET.

BOURKE'S PARRAKEET.

Psittacus Bourki, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Euphema Bourkii*, GLD.; *Platycercus Bourki*, FNSCH.

GERMAN: *Der Bourksittich*.

THIS most charming Parrakeet was discovered by the late John Gould, F.R.S., in the interior of New South Wales, where it is far from common, and was named by him after Governor Bourke of that colony.

It is a small bird, in size between the Budgerigar and the Turquoise, very gentle and inoffensive, and extremely pretty. Like the Budgerigar, it is waved, or undulated, but on a pale salmon instead of a yellow ground, the forehead, the tops of the shoulders and the sides are blue, the beak is black, and the feet brownish grey: a small white ring surrounds the eyes, which are full and dark.

The female resembles her mate, but is without the blue frontlet, which serves as a differentiating mark between the sexes: the young resemble their mother. These beautiful birds are said to have been bred in Germany, while in this country the nearest approach to success that has been chronicled is the production of eggs; but as they are fairly hardy birds, amateurs should live in hopes of ultimately getting them to reproduce their species here.

Dr. Russ writes respecting the Bourke, "*Ist durchaus nicht weichlich und nistet ebensowol im Käfige als auch in der Vogelstube unschwer und sicher*", (It is by no means delicate, and nests as well and readily in the Cage as in the Bird-room.)

As it is rarely imported, the Bourke commands a high price, £10 being the sum usually demanded by the dealers for a couple of these birds; and we are not aware of any aviary-bred specimens having been offered in the market; so that to breed a few of them would be a very lucrative speculation; but they are as rare almost as a Phoenix,

so much so that the Zoological Gardens do not possess a pair, or even a single individual of the species.

Mr. Wiener writes of the Bourke, "This delicately-tinted Australian Grass Parrakeet is one of the most gentle birds of the Parrot tribe. It is much to be regretted that it is so rarely imported, and therefore very dear to buy. If once acclimatised these birds are very hardy, and breed freely. Mr. Groom, of Camden Town, London, had the best pair which I ever saw, and kept them summer and winter in one of the open-air aviaries of his own construction, where the birds hatched a brood of young. I quote Mr. Groom's report *verbatim*:—"The egg of the *Bourkei* is about the size of a Turquoise's egg, of roundish shape. The male bird assists in the incubation. Time, about seventeen days. Nest in wood log hollowed out for them, as they do not appear to have the power to cut away the wood like most Parrakeets do."

On reading the foregoing extract, we wrote to Mr. Groom for further particulars, and append his reply, merely remarking that these birds should not be called "*Bourkei*", which is the genitive case of their specific name, and not at all a plural, as some dealers and one author seem to regard it: Bourke, or Bourke's Parrot or Parrakeet, is their correct English name, *Psittacus Bourkei* their scientific designation.

Mr. Groom writes: "In reply to your letter *re* Bourke's Parrakeets, I regret that I can give you no more information than that given by Mr. Wiener, in his account of Cage Birds. I think it is well known they are gentle and affectionate: the pair you saw at the Shows, I had about four years, fed almost entirely on canary-seed; they were two years in the small-sized garden aviaries, nine feet by four, length seven feet by three feet, the same you and Mr. Wiener term large doll-houses. I must tell you the wood-house was a very snug one, quite free from draughts, and would have been too close with the windows shut in the summer evenings; but these birds did well through the two severe winters; on cold days, and in fact during the severe months, they were kept in the wood shed, I never saw any difference in them. The hen died suddenly on the nest, before the young were a day old; the male was sold to a gentleman from Germany, he taking it from the Alexandra Palace Show. I have no doubt they would breed in suitable aviaries could one obtain a young pair: should I have the opportunity of again possessing a pair, I would take notice of their particular habits and let you know."

"A relation of this sort, well authenticated, is worth all the Greek and Latin of all the nomenclators, that ever barbarized language for the purpose of obscuring knowledge", as Cuvier said in another connection; but, so little originality is there in the world, the same remark

was made long long before him, by the anonymous author of the book of Job, who makes the Eternal inquire "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" so true it is, as another wise man said, that "there is nothing new under the sun"; and we cannot say much more about the Bourke than has been already said.

The price of this bird, says Dr. Russ, is from seventy-five to one hundred marks each, which is about what an English dealer would ask for the occasional specimen of a very charming bird that chanced to reach his hands, that is to say as nearly as possible twice its weight in gold, for the Bourke is not a heavy bird, being plentifully provided with feathers, which enable it to bear with impunity the frequent changes of temperature to which it is subjected in its own country, as well as the rigour of our winter, and the still more trying easterly winds of spring.

What a delightful country this of ours would be, were it not for those terrible east winds that, sweeping over the whole continent of Europe before they reach our shores, arrive in our midst, not only deoxygenated, but laden with miasmata and dusty refuse of all kinds, to spread death and desolation on our coasts; but so it is: the "hot winds" of Australia, the siroccos of Africa, and the icy blasts that occasionally make their way southwards from the Arctic pole, or northwards from the Antarctic, are all objectionable, not to say pernicious, in their several ways; but their capacity for mischief falls into mere insignificance when compared with the power for evil possessed by our English east winds, that carry ruin and destruction on their wings, and make life itself scarce worth having while they last.

Yet the late Charles Kingsley professed to like the east wind, and even wrote, we understand, an ode, or a song in praise of it! which, to our mind, was carrying insular singularity to a singular extreme. "When the wind is in the east", says an ancient rhyme, "'tis neither good for man, nor beast", a sentiment with which we are entirely in accord, and yet Bourke's Parrakeet seems to take no account of those east winds, beyond ruffling up his feathers a little, and seeking the shelter of the covered-in portion of the aviary.

It seems cruel, nevertheless, to expose the natives of a semi-tropical clime to such ungenial influences; but what enormities will not men, and women too, perpetrate in order to the gratification of their appetites and whims?

We fancy these birds would be much more likely to breed in a snug indoor aviary, where the temperature could be maintained at a suitable height during the cold months of winter and spring, than if left to the chances of the weather in an aviary out of doors: and the

same remark applies to many other species of exotic birds, which can, it is true, survive the rigours of our climate, but would certainly thrive much better if duly protected from them.

The western aviary at the "Zoo", is our *beau-ideal* of what an aviary should be; only we would have it all in one, a comfortable house at the back, where hot-water pipes maintained an equable temperature all the year round, and a spacious flight in front, well grassed, and planted with suitable trees and shrubs, with a limpid streamlet meandering through, in which the birds could drink and wash themselves at will, without risk of contaminating the water, and from which they could be shut off when necessary during the prevalence of frost or intemperate winds.

In such a place it should be the rule, and not the exception, for the birds to breed; and where, as in the case of the Parrakeets under consideration, the price of sundry species is high, the undertaking should be at least self-supporting, if, indeed, an actual profit were not obtained.



BUDGERIGAR.

UNDULATED GRASS PARRAKEET, OR BUDGERIGAR.

Psittacus undulatus, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Melospittacus undulatus*, GLD.; *Euphema undulata*, SHW.;
Nanodes undulatus, JARD. & SLB.; etc., etc.

GERMAN: *Der Wellensittich*. FRENCH: *La Perruche Ondulée*.

BOOKS have been written about the Budgerigar, which has now become as familiar in our midst as the Canary Finch, and like the latter bird has "sported" from the original stock into several varieties, so distinct from their common ancestor as to completely puzzle persons unacquainted with their parentage, and render it all but impossible to say to what species, or genus rather, of the *Psittacidae* they belong.

One of the prettiest accounts of this delightful bird with which we are acquainted is that by M. Leroy, of Paris, whose book is not only most charmingly written and interesting, but thoroughly exhaustive.

We cannot, however, give equal praise to *La Perruche Ondulée* of M. Léon Mary, who has thought proper to enter into certain details of *mœurs*, or character, he had far better have left unnoticed; but he also goes into the statistics of the matter, which may be of use to beginning aviarists, and an encouragement to others.

"With two hundred francs", writes M. Mary, "you will build your aviary, and, at that figure, it will not be inelegant."

Food	{	20 Parrakeets during 305 days	}	Francs	Cents
		111 " " 180 "		272	80
Repairs, say	...	...	...	25	0
Interest at 10 per cent on price of 10 pairs				14	0
Interest at 10 per cent on cost of aviary	...			20	0
				<hr/>	<hr/>
				331	80
111 young ones sold	...	...	...	666	0
Deduct cost of keep, etc.	...	...	...	331	80
				<hr/>	<hr/>
PROFIT	...	...	...	334	20—Between £13 & £14.

"Such" he continues, "is the result I obtained, but I must admit that it is culminating, a *desideratum* to which it will be well to aspire."

So we should say: but even in this colder climate we have had twenty-six young from two pairs in one season, and, perhaps, no more than two the next.

Budgerigars, we prefer this name to the longer appellation of Undulated Grass Parrakeet, do better in small companies of from six to ten pairs, than when kept in single couples; and if their aviary is of sufficient extent, one hundred pairs may be placed together, with the best aggregate results: but there must be no odd birds, neither solitary hen, nor mateless cock, among the number.

Of course there must be a sufficiency of nesting accommodation, in the shape of hollow logs of wood, natural, or artificially made, or of cocoa-nut husks; and, failing these, small boxes, such as cigar-boxes, with a hole cut in the upper edge of sufficient size to admit of the birds passing freely in and out, and half a cocoa-nut shell cemented into the bottom; as otherwise the eggs would roll about on the flat surface of the wood and be spoiled, while the concavity of the shell affords a suitable receptacle for them. If a portion of the aviary is protected from the weather, the birds may remain in it all the year round, as they are very hardy, and appear to feel no ill effects from the severest cold: of draughts, however, they are, in common with all birds, very impatient, so that the aviary we prefer for them is one placed against a wall that faces to the south, or the south-west, and open at the top for the greater part of its extent; the open portion should be well grassed, but it is useless to plant trees in the enclosure, as the inhabitants would immediately pull them to pieces.

When the grass is long, the Budgerigars much delight to roll in it, especially when wet with the morning dew, or a passing shower: and it is a pretty sight to see them swimming as it were in the ocean of verdure that surrounds them.

The covered-in part of the aviary should be well lighted, or the whole front may advantageously be made of glass, wired on the inside, lest during a sudden nocturnal panic, to which these birds are subject, they injure themselves by dashing against the glass: the top, however, should be securely boarded over, and on the boards should be a covering of thatch or felt.

The nests should be placed in the covered-in portion of the aviary, as near the roof as possible, and whether hollow log, or cocoa-nut husk, or box, the aperture should be turned towards the light, in order to enable the old birds to feed their young, which we have found that

they were unable to do in complete darkness, though a small modicum of light seems to suffice them for the purpose.

The eggs of this species, like those of all the Parrot family, are white, and vary in number from four to nine, five or six being, perhaps, the average number laid.

In their wild state these birds have two broods in the season, but in domesticity three or four; not unfrequently, especially when kept indoors, breeding continuously all the year round.

They are extremely precocious birds; so much so that we have known them pair, lay eggs, and rear young before they had moulted their nest-feathers, and were themselves not more than three or four months old, and in fact we have seen them caress before they had left their nest three weeks! It is not desirable to permit this, as the offspring of such immature birds are worthless, and the effect of rearing them prejudicial to the youthful parents themselves.

It is almost superfluous to describe a bird so well known as the Budgerigar, but it would scarcely be *en règle* not to do so: the ground colour of the plumage is green below, yellow on the upper portion of the body; the head is yellow, the neck, back, and wing coverts are yellow edged with greyish black, the flight feathers black fringed with yellow, the tail is blue in the centre, the other feathers green with yellow spots in the middle; on each side of the beak is a series of deep blue spots, forming an almost continuous line, and below these two or three round black spots, which have been very generally overlooked in the description of these birds. In the adult male the cere of the nostrils is bright blue, in the adult female bluish cream until she has nested, or is about to nest, when it becomes brown: this is the differentiating mark between the sexes, which cannot otherwise be distinguished from each other. The bill is white, and the legs and feet light slate colour.

These little birds are capable of being completely tamed, but as they bite severely, it is necessary when first taking them in hand to wear stout gloves; it is no less indispensable to clip the feathers of one of their wings, and in the course of a few weeks they become perfectly docile, and may be taught a variety of tricks. While the taming process is going on, the birds should be kept singly in a little cage, and handled several times a day; as they are very intelligent, they will soon discover that no harm is intended them, and, losing all fear, they will readily hop from their cage on to the finger that is held out to them, and on which they are to be carried round the room, and even out of doors.

We have seen it recommended, when the birds are quite familiar,

to pluck out the stumps of the wing feathers that had been cut, but it is better not to do so, as the longer they are dependent on their owner for locomotion, the less danger there will be of their relapsing into wildness, when they have regained the power of flight.

White millet is the best food for these pretty little Parrots, but canary-seed may be added as a variety now and then; they require a constant supply of tufts of grass, and a handful of hay-seed thrown down on the aviary floor, will give them much pleasure, and keep them employed for hours: they also love to whittle a log of soft, or half rotten wood, and the aviaryist who has the welfare of his pets at heart, will provide for their amusement, as well as for their bodily wants.

It has been advised to give them egg food, and bread and milk sop; both are not only unnecessary, but injurious: we have, more than once, expressed our belief that many Parrots were partially insectivorous in their habits, but the Budgerigar is not of these: during a long and tolerably extensive experience with these birds, we have never seen one touch an insect of any description, although access to such diet was generally within their reach.

When the Budgerigar has young ones to feed, he will require an addition to his ordinary diet, in the shape of oats, either given in their natural condition, or boiled until soft, strained, and left to grow cold: the crumb of stale white bread, soaked in *cold* water, and then squeezed nearly dry, will also be necessary, for half-a-dozen young Parrots take a good deal of feeding, and there is danger, if only dry food is allowed, of the supplies falling short, and the young growing up either stunted or deformed.

Upon the father devolves the principal part of the duty of rearing the little ones, no less than of providing for the wants of the female while she is sitting on her eggs; for unlike the Cockatiel, the male Budgerigar takes no part in the task of incubation, and it will be readily understood that an abundant supply of food requiring comparatively little preparation will enable him to fulfil his important duties with less strain on his own organization, than if all the edible substances placed at his disposal were dry seeds that had to be three parts digested in his own crop, before they become fit for assimilation by the little ones. In Southern Australia, where the Budgerigars are found, they feed exclusively on the seeds of the indigenous grasses, which, at that season of the year, are soft, or at least never as dry and hard as the millet and canary-seed that are given to them in this country; and as one of the first conditions of a successful rearing of foreign birds in captivity, is to assimilate their diet as closely as possible to that of which they partake in their native woods, no more need be

said about the necessity of giving the Budgerigar, and for that matter all Parrots, a sufficient supply of soft food during the breeding-season.

The following amusing and interesting account of the *entrée* of a young Budgerigar into the aviary world, is from the graphic pen of M. E. Leroy:—

“When a month old, the youthful Parrakeet has grown all his feathers, and begins to pop his head out of the hole of the log in which he was born.

“His parents are near at hand, and cheer him on.

“He is hungry and begs for food: but instead of feeding him as usual, they promise him some by and bye: they show it to him on the point of the paternal beak: they offer it to him, backing away at the same time, in order to induce him to advance: in other words, they hold the sweet-meat high.

“He would gladly come out, but is afraid.

“He puts out his head, and, amazed by the unknown, by the vastness of all around, backs in again.

“He looks down, and is seized with giddiness: he looks up, and the giddiness increases: it is so deep, up there!

“He, too, would gladly fly like his parents, enjoy all the beautiful things he sees, bathe himself in the sun rays, drink the dew, plume himself on the perches, take his place at the seed-pan, cling to the spray of chickweed.

“Ah! yes, he would, indeed—but—he is afraid.

“He ventures half his body out; he is off. Not at all! he darts back again. The unknown attracts, and at the same time appals him. He longs and is afraid.

“His parents, who understand his hesitation, come to the rescue.

“While his mother endeavours to coax him out with the bribe of a dainty morsel, carefully held beyond his reach, the father, who has crept into the interior of the log, comes upon him unawares, and gives him a push behind to make him get on.

“In vain! The child clings hard, and refuses to budge. It will not be this time.

“This pretty comedy sometimes continues for two or three days, during which time the old hollow log will afford you as much entertainment as a vaudeville.

“All at once, when you are beginning to think he will never stir, the youngster, who has at length grown familiar with the appearance of the outside world, with the limitless expanse around him, the youngster makes a start, and half afraid, half pleased, settles himself upon a perch.

"Once there, he stops to take breath. He really is upset, I can assure you, the dear little fellow.

"Papa and mamma fly to his assistance; perch themselves by his side; talk to him; cheer him; laugh at him, and feed him, by turn.

"Then they plume their baby: they smooth the feathers of his wings and tail, which the dirt of the nest might have soiled, or stuck together, so that the youngster may be clean, in possession of all his powers, and have the free use of his ærial apparatus.

"He looks at himself, thinks himself handsome, as proud as an urchin who has just handled his first pair of knickers.

"He perks himself, preens his feathers, stretches out one foot, and then a wing.

"Ah! fact is one had not room to turn oneself at the bottom of a well, jammed in with five or six others, in a hole a few inches wide.'

"He gapes, as he stares at you. His manner, half timid, half defiant, seems to say, 'Well, what is it?'

"Do you think one si comfortable in a press?'

"So: once he has quitted the hollow log, he returns to it no more. That is finished, thank Heaven! you are not likely to catch him at it again.

"Unless—that is to say—the weather should change to cold.

"He has tasted liberty, and he enjoys it."

We have heard of cases in which the peculiarly English superstition of keeping Parrots without water has been extended to the subject of the present notice; one person boasting that he kept his "Australian Love-Bird" for, we forget how many, years without any moisture but what the poor creature derived from "pellets of bread and butter chewed in the mouth!" Is it possible to imagine anything more horrible! and the marvellous part of the thing to us is how the practice can have arisen.

Budgerigars seldom bathe, and never if they can find wet grass to roll in. In their native land they seem to prefer brackish to fresh water, and are much benefited by fresh cuttle-fish backs being given them to peck at; a piece of rock-salt at the bottom of their cage, or on the floor of their aviary, is also much relished, and is greatly conducive to health.

These little birds live for about ten years in captivity, but are not much good for breeding after four years; in fact we have found hens of little use after their third year: so that a constant infusion of fresh blood into the *perrucherie* is essential, especially as few birds so deteriorate by in-breeding as the Budgerigar.

We have seen birds of this species of an entirely yellow plumage,

and others of a faint yellowish green, with scarcely a trace of the characteristic undulations: while a blue variety is stated to have been produced in Belgium, where the yellow birds originated a few years back: to us these "sports" are far less beautiful than the little, sprightly green-coated Budgerigar, now so familiar to aviarists; that they are more delicate than the original bird, we are certain, and it is probable that without much care, and judicious crossing, these accidental variations will die out, which, after all, would perhaps be no misfortune: though doubtless others will arise, and in time there will be Budgerigars, as there now are Canaries, of all colours, with scarce a trace of their origin discernible about them.

In Jardine's *Naturalist's Library*, Selby writes of the Budgerigar, which he named "Undulated Nanodes" (*Nanodes undulatus*, Vig. et Horsf.), as follows:—"This little species, which scarcely exceeds seven inches in length, approaches still closer than its congeners in colour and appearance to the Ground Parrot, and brings the genus *Pezoporus*, Illg., into immediate connexion with that to which it belongs."

It might be thought that the force of imagination could scarcely further go, but it does, considerably further; for M. E. Leroy is reminded by it of the Swallow!

"*Par sa structure*", writes that author, "*par ses formes élancées, par la petitesse de ses jambes, la longueur de ses ailes et de sa queue; en un mot, par son grément et sa voilure, si je puis m'exprimer ainsi, la perruche oudulée se rapproche beaucoup de l'hirondelle, si ce n'est que, dans le vol, les plumes caudales, au lieu d'affecter la forme fourchue, se déploient en éventail, les plus longues au milieu, absolument comme celles du faisan.*"

The Budgerigar like a Swallow! we are tempted to exclaim with Hamlet, "Like a Whale!"

Nor is Selby much happier in his resemblance of the Undulated one to the Ground Parrot: both are Parrots, it is true, and both are green, with dark undulated markings on a portion of the plumage, but there the resemblance ceases.

Dr. Russ has written a book about the Budgerigar, and the subject is far from being exhausted: but the doctor is not exact when he says of it: "*Verbreitung fast ganz Australien*", for it is strictly confined to that portion of the island comprised within the limits of the colony of South Australia, and in point of fact is as rare in New South Wales and Victoria, as it is in England, or rarer.

It is a bird of passage, migrating south to breed; "*Zugvogel*", as Dr. Russ remarks, and returning northwards when its one or two broods of young have been reared, to feed on the grass seeds that have been

matured on the vast plains of the interior during its absence in the south; and it on these journeys to and from their breeding grounds that the professional bird-catchers lie in wait for them, and take them, old and young, by the thousand.

These birds are very hardy, and though tightly packed in close boxes, wired only in front, and generally kept without water during the voyage, they usually arrive in fair condition; and, contrary to the opinion of some writers, go to nest quite unconcernedly in the aviary a few weeks after their arrival.

Endowed with a great love of hearing its own voice, the Budgerigar is an almost incessant warbler, nor is his little song altogether unpleasing, or devoid of melody; except when eating or sleeping he is always singing after his fashion; and if he has no companion to whom to address his lays, or speech, whichever it may be, he takes a stick of some kind into his confidence, and chatters to it by the hour, running his beak up and down the perch, or stick, after a manner that is no less curious than bewildering to the looker-on.

Very fond of company, the Budgerigar will, nevertheless, live quite well by himself, and, if he pines for society, does not show it, but "lets concealment, like a worm i' the bud" prey on his vitals, and these must be tough, for they last him a long while.

An interesting account of a talking Budgerigar appeared in a recent number of Dr. Russ's ornithological paper, *Die Gefiederte Welt*; and we have had males that imitated, passably, the Canary's song.

The females of this species are extremely subject to egg-binding, a fatality which, we are inclined to think, arises from two distinct causes: namely, debility and deficiency of lime in the system.

In-breeding is a frequent source of debility, which is more susceptible of prevention than of cure: the amateur must not suffer consanguineous unions to take place among his birds, which will then be strong, large, and vividly coloured: while inbred specimens are, as a rule, under-sized, delicate, and of a pale washed-out shade, that is any thing but attractive.

Egg-binding from deficiency of lime should not be allowed to occur in any well-regulated aviary, the floor of which should be abundantly covered with sand, small gravel, old mortar and oyster-shells pounded, or even the broken up egg-shells of the domestic fowl.

It has been thought that an accumulation of fat on the internal organs gives rise to egg-binding, and so, in some cases at least, it does, by causing actual obstruction to the passage of the egg from the oviduct into the cloaca, and giving rise to inflammation, which generally terminates fatally. Occasionally a kind of spasm of the

sphincter, or circular muscle that regulates the anal aperture, prevents the bird depositing her egg, and this form of the disease may be recognised by the straining, and impotent efforts of the poor bird to get rid of her burden; in which case a drop or two of oil introduced into the vent by means of a small camel-hair brush, combined with warmth, will relax the spasm, and enable the egg to be laid: but birds so troubled are weak, and should be caged up and well fed for a few days, or even weeks, before being restored to their mates.

Some hens sit so continuously that, unless the cock is a most attentive partner, and has an abundance of food at his disposal, they actually die upon their nests, especially during the first days after the hatching of the little ones; others again wear themselves out in a season by too assiduous attention to the great business of continuing the species, and should have their laudable desire to people the world with Budgerigars kept within reasonable limits.

Hardy and desirable as a cage or aviary bird, there would not be the least difficulty in acclimatising the Budgerigar in this country, were but a strict protection accorded them for a few years, after which they would defy the farmer's guns. During winter, especially if severe and prolonged frost set in, it would be necessary to scatter seed and especially oats near their haunts, as is now done for the Pheasants in many preserves; and as they are not destructive to growing crops, there is no reason why these pretty birds should not soon become a feature in our woods and copses. It would then be interesting to observe whether they reverted to the ancestral migratory habits of the species in Australia, and sought "fresh fields and pastures new" when the breeding fever was upon them.

Where would they go to? cross the seas to Southern France or Spain? Who can tell: only let the experiment be made. Who will turn out a couple of hundred, or so, of Undulated Grass Parrakeets some fine May morning, in a well-preserved wood, full of ancient trees, in the holes and crevices of which the Australian strangers might make their nests and rear their young; and so help to solve a deeply interesting ornithological problem?

That such a scheme is practicable we have no doubt, for these birds breed freely in garden aviaries, and there are instances on record in which escaped pairs have actually reared a brood in this country, as well as on the continent: let some amateur then, with whom the conditions for a successful carrying out of the experiment are possible, make the attempt, and record the result in some one of the many Journals that make "Aviculture" a speciality.

As we write, Budgerigars are more scarce in the market than they

have been for a long time, 12s. 6d. and 15s. a pair: while lately they could have been purchased for about 8s. a couple: at the latter price, however, they "pay" well, for they are frugal birds, cost little to keep, and multiply with extraordinary rapidity.

As a rule Budgerigars do not interfere with other birds, but it is better to keep them in an enclosure by themselves, or associated with Cockatiels: the Finches tease them, and fill their nests with hay and rubbish; while the various Love-birds are quarrelsome, and Turquoisines, Red-rumps, *et hoc genus omne* would soon make an end of the Undulated folk: still we have known vicious Budgerigars that not only fought among themselves, but committed murderous assaults upon the other inmates of the aviary; and should such an evilly-disposed individual be discovered in a flock, he, or, more frequently, she, had better be removed, and condemned to solitary confinement for the remainder of her, or his, days: it is just such perversely tempered birds that make the best and most familiar pets; they have apparently been slighted, or injured by their own kind, and find that consolation in the society and companionship of their owner which is denied them by their congeners.

A lady having written to us to inquire how she should pronounce the word Budgerigar, a native term signifying "pretty bird", we reply: *Bud-ger-ee-gar*—the first "g" soft, as in geranium; and the second, hard, as in garden.



GREEN GROUND PARROT.

GREEN GROUND PARROT.

Psittacus pezophorus.

SYNONYM: *Pezophorus formosus*, GLD. GERMAN: *Der Erdsittich*.

FRENCH: *La Perruche terrestre, ou ingambée*.

THE Ground Parrots form a group quite *sui generis*, and are very little known out of their native country, or rather countries, for they occur in New Zealand, as well as in Australia and Tasmania.

In this country we have never seen a living example of any of the numerous species composing the genus, and no mention of any of them is made in Dr. Russ's comprehensive *Handbook*; which is the more to be wondered at, that in those regions where they are found, they are far from uncommon, but being partially nocturnal in their habits, and moreover extremely shy, they are not so frequently seen as many of their really less abundant congeners.

The species under consideration is of frequent occurrence in Tasmania, and is also found in the southern parts of Australia: it is about the size of the Cockatiel, and is of a yellowish green colour, spotted and undulated with black: the tail is long and slender, the two central feathers are green marked with transverse bands of yellow, an arrangement which is reversed in the remaining tail feathers, which are yellow barred with green: just above the nostrils is a narrow band, or frontlet of deep scarlet: the legs are long and of an ash colour.

It is said to make no nest, but to lay two white eggs on the bare ground, under the shelter of some log, or rock: a statement which we are unable to verify, or disprove from personal knowledge, but which appears, nevertheless, to be its usual custom.

It is evident from the configuration of the bird, that its habits are chiefly terrestrial, and it is said not to perch in trees, and seldom to take to flight, but, even when pressed by dogs and hunters, to prefer trusting to its strong legs, with which it runs very swiftly through the grass and underwood.

It is curious that this bird should never be imported, and on questioning a wholesale dealer in foreign birds as to the reason, he replied that the Ground Parrots fed on fresh roots and bulbous plants, and could not be preserved alive during the voyage to this country: which we think can scarcely be the true reason; for if the delicate honey-eating Lories can be brought over alive, surely a bird that can make a hearty meal off a raw potato, should not be very difficult to cater for, but ought to be imported with ease.

The fact is, bird-dealers, like other people, get into a groove, and there is no such thing as getting them out of it: they have not been used to such and such birds, and one might just as well inquire for a Phoenix at their establishments, as for one of the Ground Parrots, or other birds to which they are unaccustomed.

The Ground Parrots are partly insectivorous in their habits, and we doubt the possibility of their been kept alive for any length of time without an adequate supply of insect food; but where cockroaches abound, and mealworms are readily attainable, this should be no insurmountable difficulty in the way either of their importation, or preservation when imported. Let the dealers then see to it, and bring us over some Ground Parrots, and Gang Gangs, and other birds, plentiful enough in their own country, but rare, or altogether unknown here, and they will be remunerated for their trouble, and no inconsiderable advance be made in the knowledge of ornithology, which, as a home pursuit, is quite in its infancy among us.

New Zealand contains a number of different species of these birds, varying in size from that of a small goose, to that of a Rosella Parrakeet, all coloured and shaped after the same pattern, and certain to be the first of the Parrots to fade away from the surface of the earth, in consequence of their feeble powers of flight, and inability to convey themselves out of reach of predatory animals. One species, *Strigops habroptilus*, has already almost disappeared from its native haunts, and the others are getting scarcer every year.

Some of these birds burrow in the ground, like rabbits, and bring up their young in this situation: the Great Owl Parrot of New Zealand being an especial instance of departure from the general habits of the race. Writing of this species, Mr. Wood observes: "Even in its habits this bird has much of the Owl nature, being as strictly nocturnal as any of those birds (the Owls). During the daytime it conceals itself in holes, under the stumps of trees, and similar localities, seldom being seen except after sunset. The natives of New Zealand, where it is found, say that during the winter months the Owl Parrots assemble together in great numbers, collecting themselves into certain large

caverns, and that while arranging for their winter quarters, and before dispersing for the summer, they become very noisy, and raise a deafening clamour."

Are we to infer from the above quotation that these birds are in the habit, as Swallows are said to be, of hybernating? we think not: the practice is one foreign to bird nature; birds are incapable, as a rule, of enduring prolonged abstinence, and the winters in New Zealand are not of such severity as to deprive the indigenous races of their accustomed food, as happens in higher latitudes.

We are unable to record the "native" name of the Green Ground Parrot, but the Owl Parrot (*Strigops habroptilus*) is called by the Maoris "Kakapo", no doubt from its cry: like its Green Ground relative, it is weak of wing, and, as Mr. Wood continues, "seldom trusts itself in the air, taking but a very short flight when it rises from the ground. Neither it is seen much in trees, preferring to inhabit the ground, and making regular paths to and from its nest, by means of which its habitation may be discovered by one who knows the habits of the bird. These tracks are about a foot in width, and so closely resemble the paths worn by the footsteps of human beings that they have been mistaken for such by travellers": and might very readily become the means of saving life; for a man lost in the "bush", and nearly dead from starvation, following one of them up, thinking it led to a human dwelling, and finding a nest of young birds, as large as a good-sized fowl, would be able to keep himself alive on their succulent flesh, until discovered by the party sent out to look for him.

It has been conjectured that the absence of predatory mammals in New Zealand is the main reason of the departure of these curious birds from the common habits of the race; and that from seeking, unmolested, their food on the ground, they, in the lapse of ages, acquired terrestrial preferences, and lost, or almost lost, the use of their wings from sheer long-continued inaction—surely a lesson for indolent folk, who prefer riding their thoroughbred horses, or being driven about in their luxurious carriages, to using the means of locomotion provided for them by nature.

This hypothesis, however, will scarcely account for the presence of *Pezophorus* in Australia and Tasmania, where small predatory animals are found in great abundance, and terrestrial Parrots are not by any means uncommon.

The late John Gould, F.R.S., frequently found nests of these birds under the stumps of trees, and among rocks; the eggs were laid on the bare ground, in a little hollow evidently fashioned by the birds themselves, and without any attempt at nest making. Whatever may

be the average number of young in a brood of the smaller *Pezophori*, it appears that the larger species, *Strigops habroptilus* for instance, only lay one egg at a time, and have no more than two young in the season; from which it will be readily gathered that so unprolific a bird, especially when so imperfectly provided with means of escape from its now numerous enemies, wild cats, and rats of European origin, will very soon become extinct in the islands where it was formerly found in sufficient abundance.

This disappearance of a curious animal is to be regretted for many reasons, but is, apparently, in the nature of things, unavoidable; and doubtless it has played, or almost played out its part in the economy of nature, like the Moa and the Dinornis, and, there being no further reason for its presence on a sufficiently crowded scene, *exit* *Pezophorus*, is the stage direction that must be strictly obeyed, or confusion would certainly ensue.



WEST AFRICAN LOVE-BIRD.

WEST AFRICAN LOVE-BIRD.

Psittacus pullarius, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Agapornis pullaria*, BP., HETL.; *Psittacus guineensis*, MLL.;

Psittaculus guineensis, *Psittacula guineensis*, etc., etc.

GERMAN: *Der Unzertrennlliche*. FRENCH: *La Perruche à tête rouge*.

THE "Love-birds" form another important and self-separating group of the *Psittacidae*, and are found in the old and new world; the species under consideration is perhaps the best known of any, and has been in the hands of dealers and amateurs from time immemorial.

It is a little larger than a Bullfinch, and of equally stout build: the prevailing colour of the plumage is green, darker on the upper than on the under surface of the body: a ring of red, deeper on the head than on the throat, surrounds the beak, and varies in extent and intensity of hue according to the age of the bird: the tail is about an inch and a half in length, the first part of each feather for about half its length is red, then comes a black spot, and the extremity is yellowish green: the upper tail coverts are so long as to reach the end of the tail, so that this appendage, unless when the bird is flying, seems to be altogether of the same colour as the rest of the body: the beak is long and rather stout for the size of the bird, and is of a yellowish red colour, the eye is full and black, and the legs and feet grey.

The female resembles the male, but the under surface of his wings is black, while in her the colour is dark green; otherwise the sexes are alike in size and general appearance.

There is a prevalent opinion abroad that these birds are so affectionately attached to each other, that if one dies, the other is certain not long to survive it: hence the rather inappropriate name of "Love-bird", for, alas, for the romantic notion! the inseparable will live very well in single blessedness, and trouble himself, or herself, not one whit about the "dear departed."

"They are so much attached to each other that they must always be had in pairs, and if one dies, the other rarely survives it." The fact being, that the fever, or consumption, contracted on the voyage, that shortens the days of one, has usually been communicated to the other—*et hinc illæ lachrymæ*.

"Some people think", continues the ancient Bechstein, as the Germans affectionately term the father of bird-lore in their country, no less than in our own, "that a mirror hung in the cage, in which the survivor may imagine that it still sees its lost companion, will console it. The male remains affectionately near the female, feeds her, and gives her the most tender caresses; she, in her turn, shows the greatest uneasiness if she be separated from him for an instant."

Just so: the fact being that half the time the supposed 'pairs' are two males, or two females, as the case may be, when, especially if the former, they will feed and caress each other with as much assiduity, and apparent fondness, as if they were really a married couple.

"The name of *Unzertrennliche*, or 'Inseparables'" writes Dr. Russ, "is not correct, for a single individual will live for a number of years."

No, the romantic notion of their conjugal devotion must be given up, nor is the fable of their affectionate disposition any longer tenable: we have found them capable of fighting fiercely, not only with other birds, but among themselves, as a correspondent also testifies.

"Apropos of Love-birds", writes this gentleman, "I can only remark that I have a Red-faced one to which it would puzzle you to apply the epithet 'amiable', for a more surly, ill-tempered little glutton never existed. She quarrels with her husband, whom she drives about, compels to feed her with partly digested food from his craw, and then thrashes if he does not sit close enough to her, or if he dares to move before she is ready. In fact a more hen-pecked wretch never lived, and yet he seems to like it, and to be specially proud of his beautiful but utterly unamiable wife."

Some of these birds, nevertheless, are quiet and amiable enough, but their general character appears to be the reverse of good-natured: in a large aviary, where they have abundance of space to disport themselves, and more occupation, they are seen to the best advantage.

Notwithstanding some insinuations to the contrary, it is certain these birds have not as yet been bred in Europe: but in justice to a person, who professes to have bred them, we must say that there is a kindred species, called the Rosy or Peach-faced Love-bird, to which we shall refer in a subsequent chapter, that breeds freely in captivity, and it is possible, we may say probable, that the person in question confounded it with the species under consideration: we will go a step further and

assume that this is so, for we are unwilling to believe any one would deliberately sit down and pen that which had no foundation save in his own imagination, and then pawn it off upon the public as an account of his own experience: no, we have a better opinion, not only of the individual alluded to, but of human nature in general, than to believe that one who professes to be a teacher of others, would permit himself to practice so petty and mean a fraud upon the public.

A mistake is pardonable, for we are, none of us, infallible, but a deliberate attempt to deceive, when nothing can be gained by the deception, and exposure is almost sure to follow, is not to be condoned; and there are few persons to be found, as we believe, so foolish as to run the risk of incurring the obloquy that would be certain to attach to such a course.

The West African Love-bird is not one of our favourites; we have occasionally kept them, but have always found them dull and uninteresting, not only in a cage, but even in a good-sized aviary; where they soon became so shy as to hide themselves in the darkest corner they could find, so that, as they were never to be seen, we thought we might as well save ourselves the expense of keeping them, and passed them on to the first person we found willing to receive them.

Although they will endure for a certain number of years in captivity once they are thoroughly acclimatised, so many die during the process, that it is safe to say not more than two or three per hundred of those that are imported into this country survive, and their importation occurs in such numbers that, were their habitat not an extensive one, and their prolificacy great in their own country, the race would soon run the risk of becoming extinct.

Six or seven years seems to be about the average period of their duration in captivity; some specimens, however, are known to have survived for a much longer period, but on the whole we imagine we are not far wrong when we believe them to be a short-lived race: how long they live in their native woods, it is, of course, impossible to guess, but very likely their term of existence is even shorter there, as happens with almost every kind of bird.

The Common Sparrow, for instance, lives five or six years in a wild state, and has been known to exist for twenty in a cage: the same can be said of Ravens, Hawks, Pigeons, and almost every known species of bird; and the explanation is not far to seek: in the wild state, especially in this country, birds are exposed to many hardships, and have to contend against a multitude of foes, while in captivity they are, as a rule, well fed and cared for, and are moreover exempt from the fatiguing labours of reproduction, which tend materially to shorten

life. Thus a Canary that is kept in solitary confinement to sing in a drawing-room for his master's or mistress's pleasure, will not unfrequently live for fifteen or twenty years; while another that is kept for breeding purposes, rarely lives more than seven or eight years: and if an old bird, say of six or seven years, is paired for the first time, one season generally kills him, or at farthest two, even if he is an especially strong bird.

Red-faced Love-birds then cannot be supposed to be an exception to the rule, and if we find them surviving for eight or ten years in the house, we may safely conclude that half that time would have seen their end in their native woods; so that it becomes a question whether "a short life and a merry one" in freedom is not preferable to a prolonged existence in captivity: we should incline to the belief that it is, but possibly the little prisoners take an opposite view of the case: at least we will hope that they do so.



Red-faced Parakeet.

ROSY-FACED DOVE-BIRD.

Psittacus roseicollis, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Agapornis roseicollis*, BR.; *Psittacus pullarius*, var. β , LCHTST.;

Psittacus parasiticus, TMK.?; *Psittacula roseicollis*, WGL., etc.

GERMAN: *Der Rosenpapagei*.

ALTHOUGH bearing much resemblance to the subject of the last notice, this is a different bird, inhabiting Southern Africa, up to the Equator, while the Red-faced species is found on the western coast as far as Angola, whence it is frequently called, especially of older writers, the Guinea Parrot, or "Paroquet."

The Rosy-faced Love-bird is about the same size as its red-visaged congener, and like the latter, the general colour of the plumage is grass green, the forehead is scarlet, the cheeks and the throat are rosy-red, the rump and upper tail coverts are sky-blue, and the under surface of the wings blackish grey: the beak is greenish grey, the tail green with reddish, blue, and black diagonal bands.

The scarlet frontlet is of a fainter shade in the female.

The green plumage of the young is darker and the red fainter than in the parent birds, and the beak has a blackish tip.

Why these birds should be so very much dearer than their Red-faced relatives is one of those mysteries that to the connoisseur appear to be inscrutable, for they are, in every way, the more desirable of the two species, yet they are very seldom to be obtained, and then only at fancy prices: Dr. Russ says "from one hundred and eighty marks (shillings) for the pair."

As we have said, the Red-faced Love-birds have not been produced in captivity, but the Rosy-faced nest very readily in confinement, several amateurs in Germany having bred them to the third and fourth generation.

A most interesting account of his success, and that of his friends

in breeding these rare birds is given in Dr. Russ's *Fremdländischen Stubenvögel*, but is too long for reproduction here.

When referring to the next species to be considered in these pages, we will give directions for treatment, which in all three species is exactly alike.

Exigencies of space compel us to defer until a future occasion the consideration of several other members of this sub-family of the *Psittacidae*, which are, all, more at home in a good-sized aviary, where they have room to exercise their wings, and logs on which to whet their beaks, than in cages, where they mope and doze, and before dying of inanition, present for months a woeful spectacle of hopelessness and despair.

We may here repeat our protest against aviary-cages, in which beginning amateurs are so apt to crowd a number of birds of all sorts and sizes, quite irrespective of the habits and dispositions of the various species, thrust *nolens, volens*, into each other's society, with the inevitable result of disaster and death to the greater number in the course of a few weeks or, at latest, months.

Let your birds have plenty of room; or, if your space is restricted, limit the number of your birds: it is better to have two or three healthy handsome specimens, than a crowd of half-nude, miserable-looking captives.

The following interesting account of this species from Dr. Brehm's *Animal Life*, has been translated by Mrs. Cassirer, of Paris, expressly for the present work:—

"South-west Africa is the habitat of this species, especially Angola, Damara, Caffer and Namaqua Land; but, according to Kirk, it is also to be met with in the South-east, chiefly in the Zambesi district. To the best of my knowledge Andersson is the only traveller who has described the habits of these birds when at liberty. He says: 'This pretty little Parrot is to be met with all over Damara and Great Namaqua Land, it is also found in Owakango and near Lake Ngami, but always in small flocks, and never very far from water. At least once a day they resort to the water springs. The Peach-face has an unusually rapid flight; the small flocks fly by, swift as an arrow, on their way to their feeding or drinking places, yet rarely traverse great distances in a single flight. While flying, or when suddenly alarmed, they utter a series of shrill cries. Their food consists of berries, and large berry-like seeds. They do not build a nest for themselves, but take possession of those of other birds, especially those of the Siedel Sparrow and Mahali Weaver Birds. I am unable to say whether they drive out the owners, or only take such as have already been aban-

doned; but I have seen about an equal number of Siedel Sparrows and Peach-faced Parrots located under one roof-tree.”

“The Peach-faced Love-birds which I have myself kept”, continues Dr. Brehm, “and watched in captivity, have greatly excited my interest. Their manner and habits contrast advantageously with those of other dwarf Parrots: they are evidently more intelligent, bodily and mentally active, possess all the engaging qualities of their relatives, and others in addition, which render them very attractive. They always maintain their plumage in perfect order, they are very gay, generally on the move and chattering, amiable with other birds, affectionate towards their mate, and devoted to their offspring.

“Their movements in climbing resemble those of other small Parrots, but they also remind us of the Hanging, or Bat Parrakeets, since like these they occasionally hang themselves from the roof of their cage. Their voice is almost too shrill for a small room, but in a larger space, whether kept in an open flight cage, or otherwise, it gives little or no annoyance. It may best be described as a twittering, now and then prolonged into trills.

“Sometimes the male bird sits motionless, ruffled up, and with closed eyes, as if absorbed in thought, and twitters forth a little song, the single notes of which resemble his ordinary call, yet so softened and modified by connecting sounds, which vary so considerably in strength and accentuation, that an agreeable variety results.

“Winning as the Peach-face is when kept in single pairs, or several together, it is not until they prepare to breed that we are made aware of all their peculiarities. By accident I became acquainted with their indispensable requirements. When I obtained my first pair of Peach-faces, Andersson’s observations as to their habits in a wild state were not yet published, so that I had of course no suspicion that they differed so considerably in their nesting arrangements from those common to other dwarf Parrots and Parrakeets. My pets were paired, displaying the greatest affection for each other by repeated caresses, but did not commence to breed earnestly; they became as quarrelsome toward their little companions the Weaver Birds, as they were amiable toward those of their own kind, destroying their nests, and being generally troublesome. I put this down to wantonness, and did not interfere.

“They slipped in and out of the nest-box designed for them, but seemed to look upon it more as a place of concealment than a nesting place. They were evidently anxious to breed, and as plainly were in want of something. As they had hitherto only accepted grain as food, it occurred to me they might be bud-eaters, and I therefore procured leafy green sprays of willow for them. In a few minutes they had

perched upon them, quickly stripping off the leaves and gnawing the buds and bark. At first it seemed to me that this employment too was due rather to a love of mischief, than to any desire to use them as food; however on observing them more closely, I noticed that they had at length found the wished-for nesting material.

"Skilfully ripping off a piece of the peel, from six to ten c. in length, then taking it in her beak, so that one end projects about three c., the hen bends her head back, ruffles up the feathers on her rump, nestles with her beak among them, smooths them down again, and then the splinter remains fastened in the plumage. A second, third, sixth, and even eighth are thus ripped off and secured; many fall on the ground, and are taken no further notice of, many, too, are pulled out by the too officious mate; at length however some remain in place, the Parrot rises, flies slowly and cautiously to the nesting place, enters it well laden with chips, and emerges without her burden.

"Whether other dwarf Parrots act in a similar manner or not, I do not know, but consider it probable. At present (1882) I am the only person who has observed this unique habit. The whole history of birds offers no parallel to it: no single bird (not even excepting the Quaker Parrot, which builds large uncovered nests on trees) of all those with whose habits of propagation we are acquainted, conveying the nesting materials to the nest in this peculiar manner."

Commenting on these remarks, Mrs. Cassirer observes: "Here you will notice that Dr. Brehm chooses to ignore Dr. Russ's publications with regard to the Grey Head (*Agapornis cana*) entirely. The date of *My Birds* by Dr. Brehm is 1882, and already in Dr. Russ's *Hand-book* of 1878 the correct account of the manner of carrying fragments to the nest by both *P. roseicollis* and *P. canus* was given, pp. 254-255."

"As to when the first egg was laid, how long it took to hatch", continues Dr. Brehm, "and how long the cradle time of the young ones lasted, I cannot say, as I feared to disturb the birds by examining the nest. I was only able to ascertain that the latter was made of peelings, and resembles two thirds of a hollow hemisphere, that the white egg is very round and comparatively large, that the young birds emerge, from two to five in number, about ten or eleven weeks after the first pairing, and that their plumage is duller and darker than that of their parents; and the beak blackish. They are fed by both parents not only with vegetable substances, but also with Nightingale food, which permits the assumption that in a state of liberty the parents would also provide them with insect food. Immediately after the first brood, and before the young are quite independent, the old birds proceed to the second, and, it seems, the last of the season."

We may remark in conclusion of the subject, that in default of the peel of green twigs, these birds make use of strips of paper, straw and feathers, with which they construct themselves a nest in the box, or basket they have selected as the cradle of their future offspring.

This deviation from the general habit of the family of nesting in holes in trees, on the bare wood, is exceedingly curious, and affords scope for abundant reflection: how can the singular habit have originated? probably owing to a scarcity of hollow branches, in default of which the first available receptacle for the eggs and young was taken advantage of, whether Weaver Bird's nest, or some cavity in a rock, so hard that the tender eggs were broken; a sad experience that suggested the necessity of making a soft bed for their reception. But why carry the fragments between the feathers of the rump? Yes, why? when a beak was available, and so much better adapted for the purpose? Why indeed! Clearly some deficiency of reasoning power here. Our own Love-birds evinced no tendency toward nest-building, but deposited their eggs in a cocoa-nut husk, with the exception of one Madagascar hen, who carried a few pieces of straw into her husk, whether on her back or not we cannot say; but, as Mrs. Cassirer remarks, "they may have been younger birds, or less conservative in their habits", probably the former assumption is the more correct, for Mrs. Cassirer's hen, which that lady thinks "is undoubtedly an oldish bird, and has most probably already nested at least once in a state of freedom", made herself a cradle of scraps of paper, feathers and bits of hay, which shows how birds adapt themselves to circumstances: ours, not finding themselves under the necessity of constructing one, made no attempt to build a nest, and our friend's continued the custom she had learned from her relatives in her native woods.

All the *Agapornis* family is extremely amorous in disposition, and makes no scruple of pairing with any other solitary Parrakeet with which it may be consorted in an aviary; for instance, we have seen one of these birds mate with a hen Cockatiel more than three times his size, and another with a New Zealand Parrakeet of scarcely less dimensions; whether any progeny would result from such ill-assorted unions we have had no opportunity of proving; for the birds so mated, scarcely matched, did not nest, although they appeared much attached to each other.

We have also seen solitary male birds of this sub-family endeavouring to attract the attention of females of a totally different genus, as for example a Canary, and a Saffron Finch, which both seemed greatly terrified by the Love-birds' advances, and could by no means be induced to listen to them for a moment: so that we have no doubt that

any aviarist whose speciality was "mules", would have a wide field here in which to make experiments.

For our part we have no liking for hybrids, which are seldom much to look at, and are useless to those whose inclination prompts them to watch the reproduction in this cold and changeable climate of the denizens of tropical and sub-tropical regions, for they are invariably barren, and incapable of perpetuating their kind. In cases where the offspring of a "cross" proves itself to be fruitful, we are of opinion that the parents are varieties of the one and not two distinct species: for example, all the different varieties of the Domestic Pigeon will breed together, and produce a fruitful offspring, mongrel if the reader wishes, but certainly capable of generation: and the same thing happens with the common fowl; but mate the latter with a Turkey, or a Pheasant, and the progeny is absolutely barren. Whether the offspring of the cross union of the different species of *Agapornis* would be mongrels, or hybrids, we are not yet in a position to determine: but we are trying some experiments in this direction, which we expect will decide the question before long.



GREY-HEADED OR MADAGASCAR LOVE-BIRD.

GREY-HEADED OR MADAGASCAR LOVE-BIRD.

Psittacus canus, RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Agapornis cana*, *Psittacus canus*, GML.;

Psittacus polyocar, FRST.; *Polyopsitta cana*, BP., etc.; *Psittacula*
Madagascariensis, FNSCH.; *Psittacula cana*, LSS., etc.

GERMAN: *Der grauköpfige Zwergpapagei*.

CLOSELY resembling the two previous species in size and general appearance, the Madagascar Love-bird is perhaps the least desirable of all three as an inmate of the aviary, in consequence of its intolerably quarrelsome disposition: some amateurs have, nevertheless, found it harmless, and Dr. Russ himself appears to have had individuals of this species that differed vastly in character, for on page 255 of his *Hand-book*, paragraph 419, he says: "The little Grey-head (*Grauköpfchen*) is one of the most desirable inhabitants of the bird-room, and is to be prized above them all, as the most charming, most peaceable, and most readily nesting of birds."

On the very next page the doctor remarks: "Look out how you place a pair, or an old male, in the same cage with small birds, for it will murderously (*mörderisch*) bite their legs:" and such has been our experience, not only in a cage, but in a large bird-room: whence we were compelled to remove them, after the loss of several of the inmates.

The general colour of these birds is green, but the head, neck, and upper breast of the male are pale lavender; the female is green, and can only be distinguished from a Passerine Parrakeet (*Psittacus passerinus*), or from the female of the Blue-winged Parrakeet (*Psittacus gregarius*), by the black spots on her tail.

Several amateurs, both in Germany and in this country, have suc-

ceeded in breeding these birds in their aviaries, but we have never obtained young ones from ours; possibly because, not caring about the birds, we did not take particular pains to induce them to breed.

The Madagascar Love-birds have a custom, peculiar to the sub-family to which they belong, of carrying small chips of wood, bits of grass and fibre, scraps of paper even, and other rubbish into the boxes or cocoa-nut husks they have elected to build in, and there make themselves a nest: Mr. Wiener relates that his birds carried these scraps to her nest-box on her back! a feat we have not yet seen attempted, but which, nevertheless, appears to be their usual habit.

The Love-birds in the several countries where they are found, feed on various kinds of seed, and in confinement require, especially the Red-faced variety, that a portion at least of their food should be soaked for them: their diet in captivity should consist mainly of canary and millet, but hemp, oats, and maize (the small variety) should be occasionally added: green food they are very partial to of all kinds, and water is indispensable for their well-being: they do not bathe freely, but, like the Budgerigar, prefer to roll themselves in long wet grass.

All the varieties mentioned are sufficiently hardy to winter out of doors, even in England, and we have seen the Madagascar voluntarily roosting in the uncovered portion of the aviary, when the thermometer stood at considerably below zero Fahr., without any appreciable injury, and that when a good warm house was at his disposal, and most of his congeners had availed themselves of the shelter it afforded them.

The Rosy-faced, being the rarest, we have not tried out of doors, but Dr. Russ thinks it not less hardy than the rest of the *Agapornis* sub-family, of which the prettiest, gentlest, and most interesting member is the Blue-winged Love-bird (*Psittacus gregarius*).

Concerning *A. cana*, our esteemed correspondent Mrs. Cassirer writes from Paris as follows:—"I have had four nests from my Whiteheads; in each case the nesting material was carried as described by Dr. Russ and Mr. Wiener, namely, stuck between the feathers of the back and rump; so that the bird resembled a fretful porcupine. As ill-luck will have it, none of the eggs have been hatched. Last year the male bird was killed, and this year the male has been struck down with paralysis in the middle of the second brood, from the hips downwards: I presume from exhaustion from feeding the hen entirely for several weeks. With careful nursing I have brought him round so far as to enable him to sit on the perches again, but to my great regret the hind claws bend forward, so that he is lamed. I have given one third good muscatel wine with the drinking water daily for several weeks. The bird is very lively and sings, persisting in feeding his

mate from the crop, even when she is shut up in a closely-wired cage. If placed in another room, he frets and mopes."

The following account of the members of the Parrot family whose nesting arrangements differ from that of the great majority of their congeners, has been compiled for us by our friend Mrs. Cassirer, and will be read with interest:—

"The Glaucous Macaw (*Psittacus glaucus*, Vll.), *Ara bleuâtre*, *Ara gris-bleu* in French, German—*Der Meerblaue Arara*, nests in banks of streams, where he scrapes out a burrow with his powerful beak, as well as in holes of trees.

"The Hyacinthine Macaw (*Psittacus hyacinthinus*, Lthm.), French—*Ara Maximilien*, German—*Der hyazinthblaue Arara*, or *Grosser blaue Arara*, nests in hollows in banks, which the birds scrape out with their beaks; two eggs only are laid, and there are two broods in the season.

"The authorities for the above departures from the usual habits of the race are Azara and Dr. Russ.

"Müller's Parrot (*Psittacus Mulleri*, Tmmk.), French—*Perroquet de Muller*, German—*Müller's Edelpapagei*, also *Weisschnabel papagei*: hollow places in rugged, inaccessible crags or cliffs are said to be used as nesting places; brood unknown.

"Authorities Dr. Meyer, Dr. Platen, Wallare and Von Rosenberg, quoted by Dr. Russ.

"Patagonian Conure (*Psittacus Patagonus*, Vll.), in contrast to all his relatives, and in general to almost all Parrots, this Parrot does not nest in trees, but in burrows in precipitous rocks. C. F. Pöppig gives the following interesting description of one of their numerous colonies in Chili:—"The uninitiated", he says, "must be greatly astonished at these social settlements. After a toilsome march, towards noon one approaches a perpendicular cliff, and believes oneself in utter solitude; the deepest stillness reigns around, an indication of noontide in all the warmer regions of America, most of the animals being asleep at the time; a sort of grunting soon becomes audible; but in vain one endeavours to discover the animals which might probably produce it. Suddenly the warning cry of a Parrot is heard; it is caught up and repeated by many others, and before one can quite understand the matter, one is surrounded by flocks of those quarrelsome birds, which fly in narrow circles round the wanderer, and threaten to attack him in seeming anger. Out of the numerous holes in the rock, peer forth, comically enough, the round heads of the Parrots, and those which do not fly out, at least take part in the commotion by loud screams. Each hole indicates a nest, which has been burrowed out by the owners in the strata of clay which intersect the cliffs, and one may,

not unfrequently, count some hundreds of them; yet such settlements are always selected with so much foresight, that both from above and beneath they are inaccessible to beasts of prey.'

"The above account is quoted at full length by Dr. Brehm and also by Dr. Russ.

"Ernest Gibson says that flocks of them pass through Buenos Ayres night and morning: 'They come, as I suppose, from the cliffs, or Baranken of Arroyos, on this side of the Sierra de Tantil, where they breed.' Dr. Karl Russ says they nest as described, in the Andes, Cordilleren, Tosca Cliffs, etc. According to Cunningham each nest contains from three to six eggs. Molina also speaks of them. Darwin, too, observed that this Conure nests in burrows in rocks, and in earth.

"The Ground Parrot (*Pezoporus formosus*), German name *Der Erdsittich*, *Sampf*, or *Grundpapagei*. 'The white eggs are laid on the bare ground, both parents sitting by turns': authority Dr. Brehm, quoting from Gould. The same observations are greatly extended by Müller's, then superintendent of the Botanical Gardens at Melbourne, and though the latter apply to a second variety of the family, *der Höhlensittich* (*Pezoporus occidentalis*), it is very probable that they also apply to the Green Ground Parrot (*Pezoporus formosus*).

"The Great Ground Parrot (*Strigops Habroptilus*), German name *Der Kakapo*, oder *der Eulenpapagei*. Lyell says of this bird, 'The Great Ground Parrot lives in burrows under or among the roots of trees, and is also noticed under arches of overhanging rocks. As the roots of many varieties of trees in New Zealand raise themselves partly from the earth, hollows under them are very frequent; it appeared to us, however, as if those in which we met with the Kakapo had been widened, but we sought in vain for any traces of the earth that had been displaced.'

"Haast comes to the same conclusion: 'Although all the different dwellings that I examined were natural hollows, yet I found one which had been artificially constructed; on the north bank of the river Haast, near the mouth of the Clark, which is now two or three metres high (about nine and a half feet), were several round holes near the upper surface, through which the dog could not pass: he immediately began to smell on the upper surface, and commenced scratching away the earth on one spot, where he hit exactly upon the end of the burrow, and soon drew out the bird. This burrow was decidedly of artificial construction, so that it must be supposed that the bird possesses the power of digging.'

"Lyell gives the following account of the brood:—'During the latter

half of February, and the beginning of March, I found several young ones in the burrows, often only one, and never more than two together. In one case I found a rotten egg beside the young one. Generally, but not always, an old bird was found with the young one in the burrow; no exact nest is made, the Kakapo digging out only a shallow depression in the dry mass of decayed wood.' Authorities Haast, Lyell, George Grey, quoted by Dr. Brehm.

"Ring-necked Parrakeet (*Psittacus torquatus*). 'In order to rear his young family', says Blyth, 'he establishes himself not only in gardens, plantations, or shady trees, on the roads or waysides, but also in suitable cavities in large buildings, in the clefts and holes of walls.'

"The breeding-season of the Ring-necked Parrot', as we learn from Jerdon, 'occurs in the months of January, February, and March; in the centre of Africa, the rainy season, which is followed by spring, is the time for reproduction. In India, as already mentioned, not only trees are selected as nesting places, but all kinds of other cavities, even those in the most widely differing buildings: in Africa, hollows in trees only are chosen.' Quoted by Drs. Brehm and Russ.

"The Quaker or Bog Parrot, *Perruche moine, ou souris; Monks, Quäker, yunge Witue* (*Psittacus monachus*), 'Builds large open nests on trees, which often exceed a metre (three feet) in diameter, closed in at the top, and lined with grasses; often several are found in one tree, and several hen birds lay their eggs in the same nest.'—Azara, confirmed in all particulars by Darwin and others; bred in captivity by Schmidt, and in the Berlin Aquarium: a picture of the nest was drawn by Mützel for Dr. Brehm's *Birds*.

"Peach-faced Love-birds and Grey-headed Love-birds also make nests as described by Dr. Karl Russ, Mr. Wiener, myself (Mrs. Cassirer), and others."

An extremely interesting account of the nest-building propensities of the Quaker Parrot (*Psittacus monachus*), was furnished by Mr. Buxton to the *Animal World*.—"Five years ago I brought back from South America two small Green Paroquets,—these two were turned out about September, and early in October they began to build a nest on the top of a large vase, which stood in the open hall. Of course, according to their calculations the spring should have been well forward by October. They must have thought the winter unaccountably mild, and the spring and summer too disgustingly cold.

"The nest was formed of silver-birch twigs, twined and matted together, making one solid mass. The tiny birds looked very graceful flying into the hall with a long sprig of birch trailing behind them. Once, when the nest was almost three feet high, the whole of it was

blown down, but they did not seem to mind, and when it was put up again they went on adding twig to twig as if nothing had happened. During the process of building they unmercifully attacked any birds that attempted to come near the precious nest. One old Cockatoo had to be kept indoors, so savagely did they attack him; and the Doves, who also inhabit the garden hall, had anything but a pleasant time of it. Unfortunately (in January), before the nest was finished, we had to come up to London, and one day, very soon after we had left, the birds disappeared: whether they lost themselves, or were stolen, we never discovered. The nest, as then left, was some five feet high, and about six feet in circumference at the top. The birds never showed any desire to lay eggs, but probably when the warm weather came they would have made some use of their stupendous structure.

"It is heart-breaking work endeavouring to acclimatise these Parrots and Cockies; no sooner do they become very tame and affectionate than, in most cases, they disappear. The climate does not appear to affect them; they seem just as cheerful in winter as in summer, and we have never been able to trace mortality to cold. They mostly die, I fear, a sudden and violent death. A high wind, the destructive gun, destroying Hawk, and possibly starvation when lost, make havoc in their ranks."

We could go on quoting, but must refer the reader to the work itself, from which we have borrowed the above highly interesting extracts, namely, *The Animal World* for 1878.

So much for nest-building Parrots: the Love-birds carry materials into the cavities they have selected for their habitation, lining the latter with the fibres, etc., they have laboriously conveyed into them on their backs: the Kakapo and some of the Macaws, and the Patagonian Conure, occasionally, if not always, excavate dwellings for themselves in banks and cliffs, but the Quaker or Monk Parrot is the only instance known of a member of the family building a nest with sticks, and must be looked upon as an exception to the general rule, that impels these birds to rear their young in burrows.



RED-CAPPED PARAKEET.

PENNANT'S PARRAKEET.

Psittacus Pennanti, LTHM., RUSS.

SYNONYMS: *Platycercus Pennanti*, VGRES.; *Psittacus gloriosus*, SHW.;
Psittacus splendidus, GR.; *Psittacus elegans*, KHL.; etc.

GERMAN: *Pennant's Sittich*.

PENNANT'S Parakeet is a magnificent creature, applied to which the epithets *gloriosus* and *splendidus* are scarcely an exaggeration.

It was known to Bechstein, who named it after our countryman, the well-known naturalist Pennant; but in the English translation of the old German's works, it is called "the Purple Parrot." Bechstein considered that "it very much resembles the Sparrow-Hawk", but was in error in supposing that "in the female, which the bird-sellers pass as a different species, under the name of the Palm Tree Parrot, the prevailing colour is greenish yellow", for the sexes are identical in appearance, and can scarcely be accurately differentiated except by internal, and, consequently, *post-mortem* examination: an experienced eye, however, can generally manage to pick out a pair from among a number of these birds after watching them a short time, for they frequently caress each other; but it is extremely difficult to determine the sex of a given individual seen alone.

The gorgeous colours of this splendid bird, which Mr. Wiener considers, "if anything, too loud to please all tastes", are nevertheless truly magnificent; and as the bird is of considerable size, they show with greater effect than if it were of smaller dimensions. Frequently, when traversing the Australian bush, we have been startled by the sudden dash across our path of a flock of these brilliantly-plumaged creatures, that shone in the bright rays of the sun like a flash of ruby lightning, so thoroughly dazzling the eye, that to shoot them, as they passed, we found to be impossible; for they are swift on the wing, and dashing from the darkness of the timber on one side of the open road, to the gloom of the gum trees on the other, they were gone

before one actually had time to realize the fact of their passage before one's face.

Clothed in a robe of the most brilliant scarlet, the Pennant has a patch of bluish grey just under his white beak, the front of the wings and the small wing coverts are of the same colour, the primaries are black, edged outwardly with bluish grey, and the back of the neck, the back, the secondaries, and large wing coverts are black, broadly edged with scarlet, while the long tail is very dark bluish grey, or rather greyish blue; the feet and legs dark slate grey, and the nails black; the eye is dark hazel brown, and is surrounded by a narrow bare line of grey, lightly dotted with black spots.

In size the Pennant is about a third larger than the Cockatiel, but it is not nearly as elegantly shaped a bird as the latter, and not at all deserving of the epithet bestowed upon it by Kuhl and other writers, which, however, has now been definitively adjudged to another species more worthy of being so designated.

The young resemble their parents, but their colours are duller, and they do not assume the adult plumage until they are at least a year old: with the few exceptions mentioned elsewhere, all the Parrot race make their nests in hollow trees, or rather in the hollow boughs of trees, and the Pennant follows, in this respect, the custom of the vast majority of his relations. Although gregarious during the winter and autumn, these birds separate into pairs during the breeding-season, which extends from September to January; during which period two or three broods, of from four to six young ones each, are produced, and the offspring remain with their parents, even while the latter are breeding again, until the following spring, when they set up house-keeping on their own account. Their nests are generally made, as far as scraping a hole in a rotten bough can be termed making a nest, in the branches of the peppermint and stringy-bark trees that are seldom found wanting in an Australian forest, and which particularly abound in the vicinity of Mount Cole, Mount Korong, and other parts of the colony of Victoria.

These birds are very fond of brackish water, and frequent such creeks and water-holes as are moderately salt, both night and morning in great numbers.

Owing to the difficulty of securing a pair, these grand birds are not so frequently bred in our aviaries as, doubtless, they otherwise would be, for they are docile and hardy, and readily accommodate themselves to their altered circumstances, yet are always impatient of interference at the hands of their owners, who must, as much as possible, leave them to themselves if they are wished to breed.

There are many instances recorded of these birds having been successfully bred in this country, and aviary-reared specimens, quite young, and scarce half the size of their parents, have been exhibited at the Crystal Palace Bird-Show, on more than one occasion.

In the aviary the Pennants will be found quiet and peaceable, providing they have room; and as they are eminently gregarious in their wild state, several pairs, providing they really are pairs, may be kept together, and will rarely interfere with each other's domestic arrangements.

It is really a grand sight to see a flock of these birds wheeling round a water-hole in the bright sunshine, or darting across the path, at no great height above the head of the spectator, when the vivid reflection of the feathers on the under surface of their bodies is almost dazzling in its brilliancy.

In their native wilds these birds feed chiefly on the seeds of grass and other indigenous plants, but they also eat such berries as they can find, the young shoots of growing shrubs, and a good many insects of different kinds, but especially coleoptera which there abound: in the house, however, they will do very well without animal food: in fact, better without than with: except, perhaps, when they have young ones; then, a few mealworms or cockroaches may be occasionally exhibited: in a large aviary, however, there is generally a supply of insects to be found sufficient to keep the inhabitants in health, unless these should belong to the soft-billed tribes.

It is, perhaps, scarcely necessary to repeat that the Pennant, like most of its congeners, is to be fed on a diet of seeds, such as canary, hemp, millet, oats, and maize, with plenty of grass and green food, also woody fibre, without which they will not thrive, so that an abundance of logs in various stages of disintegration must be supplied for their benefit.

This Parrot is rather slow of growth, taking quite a year to reach its full size; it is long-lived, and, as we have said, healthy and hardy: in fact we know of no complaint to which it can be said to be subject: a female, now and then, becomes egg-bound, or an individual kept in a cage and dieted exclusively on hard seed, becomes constipated and has fits: but judiciously fed and managed, it is as enduring as any bird with which we are acquainted.

The price varies, but seldom falls below twenty-five or thirty shillings each, but they are not nearly so frequently seen in this country as, from their many good qualities, one might naturally expect.

The male has quite a musical voice, and if he screams rather loudly at times, his cries are not nearly so ear-piercing as those of many of

his relations; in fact, when he is courting, his "cooing", or warbling, might almost be called a song, and when heard for the first time amid the noonday silence of an Australian forest, it makes on the hearer an agreeable impression that does not soon wear off.

We have heard of talking Pennants, but never actually met with one that spoke articulately; but we make no doubt, for the bird is exceedingly intelligent, that if taken in hand when a nestling, and properly taught, it might be made to, not only whistle, but speak.

Like most of the Australian *Platycerci*, the Pennants are fond of a little insect food now and then, but in captivity they will do very well without it, and will rear their progeny on boiled maize and oats, with canary, millet and hemp seed, and a piece of stale bread soaked in cold water; a lump of rock-salt should always be within their reach.

*The Hon. and Rev. F. G. Dutton's account of Pennant's
Parrakeet (Platycercus Pennanti).*

I do not know that I have anything worth adding to that which is already known about these birds. Their extreme beauty and pleasant note must always make them desirable cage birds. Their only drawback is their shyness. I have not found it possible to overcome this in birds once shy. But I have seen very tame specimens; only when they were, they were apt to be spiteful at the same time.

It is a pity that our Australian cousins do not take the same pains with Pennant's Parrakeets that the Germans do with Bullfinches: I should think that with the same pains they would learn a great deal more, and might learn one or two tunes easily. I have never heard one talk, but if taken young from the nest, they would no doubt learn if taught with method.

Pennant's Parrakeet is described by Bechstein under the head of the "Purple Parrot."

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